Emigrant Widows of Tajikistan and Guatemala:
Where Structural Poverty and Structural Repression of Women Intersect

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May 2021

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INTRODUCTION

Guatemala and Tajikistan are two countries located in different geographical regions, and yet they appear to have similarities. Guatemala serves as a link in the drug trafficking route between the world's highest cocaine producers, Peru, Bolivia, and Colombia, and its major destination, the United States. Tajikistan receives the bulk of heroin and opium exported from Afghanistan, the world's highest producer of the two narcotics, and much of which is destined for Russia. Additionally, Transparency International's 2018 corruption perceptions index ranked Guatemala at 144 and Tajikistan at 152 out of 180 countries, placing both countries among the top third of countries in terms of governmental corruption. Likewise, many men in both countries emigrate for work. Migrant Tajikistanis overwhelmingly choose Russia as their destination, while Guatemalans look for work in Mexico or the United States. It is this latter phenomenon of labor migration that interests me most, especially as it affects the wives/significant others of men who participate in labor migration.

My coursework introduced me to a variety of topics relevant to this study, including immigration law and theory, gender issues in both the Islamic world and Latin America, the history and geography of Central Asia, and Latin American politics. Through this coursework I have written research papers on violence in Guatemala, crime and violence in Tajikistan, and women's rights movements in both countries. A look at existing literature on both countries while researching these topics, my own observations in Guatemala during a study abroad program, and informal conversations with NGO workers in both countries who focus on women's issues, seem to indicate high levels of social and/or institutional oppression of women. Thus, how do structural limitations

affect the social and economic opportunity of women in these countries whose intimate partners have left them to find work outside the country? This is the question my thesis focuses on. I am also looking at the other phenomena, including drug trafficking and government corruption, which may or may not affect the lives of these women, who I am terming "emigrant widows."

I. Research Design

This study is a qualitative study that creates an ethnographic portrait of "emigrant widows" in Tajikistan and Guatemala, including perspectives on dynamics in their society that may affect them directly or otherwise, such as crime, corruption, the economy, and so forth. My methodology includes key informant interviews, interviews with subject matter experts, and extensive reading. Analyzing the data from the interviews I conducted, I compared it to patterns gleaned from the literature to determine what commonalities and differences exist in the social and economic situations of "emigrant widows" in these two different countries. Additionally, on topics that potentially pose safety risks for the interviewees, e.g., drug trafficking and corruption, along with a review of my secondary source literature, I augmented field interviews with primary source reports and statistics produced by governmental and non-governmental agencies to see what, if any connections exist between these factors and the socioeconomic situation of emigrant widows.

II. Argument

This thesis centers around several arguments. One looks at crime in Tajikistan and Guatemala. These seemingly disparate countries both act as major throughway countries for illicit drugs travelling from their point of origin to consumer countries. Unfortunately,

due to high levels of corruption and inefficient government and judicial systems, there is a lack of accurate reporting on crime, particularly crimes related to drug trafficking and violence against women. I hypothesize, based on the scant available data, secondary literature, and piecemeal evidence gained through interviews, that similar underlying social and political/legal mechanisms and conditions are tied to the prevalence of drug trafficking in each country, to wide-scale domestic violence, and to the "push" factor motivating many men to leave their families for work elsewhere.

My second argument looks at women who live in poverty and whose husbands participate in labor migration outside the country. I will show that embedded sociocultural repression of women is comparable in both countries despite the prevalence of different religions, and that attempts to effect progressive social change have faced significant, comparable obstacles. Therefore, I will argue that in the post-Cold War era, these disparate states in sociopolitical transition historically and culturally have hindered progress towards equality for women socially and economically. Consequently, conditions persist that hinder single mothers' ability to survive and thrive, although there are positive signs of change. These two arguments coalesce into my main argument. I will show that in each country, similar structural mechanisms, both social and political/legal, contribute to the hardships of emigrant laborers and their families, particularly women.

CHAPTER 1

Methodology

This study uses qualitative methodology. It includes in-depth interviews with key informants and subject matter experts, a review of literature on relevant topics, and a survey of statistical reports for contextual data. The exigencies of the COVID-19 pandemic dictated a qualitative-only approach by precluding sample sizes large enough to yield quantitative measurements (see Section 1.D for a more detailed explanation). However, I always intended the study to be at least partly qualitative. As explained in the chapter on crime and corruption in Guatemala, obtaining reliable quantitative data for analysis on certain topics can prove challenging, and as also noted in section 2 below, doing so may carry an actual or perceived personal safety risk to research participants. Too, while quantitative data can reveal whether correlations exist among the phenomena examined in this project, and if so, to what degree, qualitative methods serve to investigate the complexities of experiences, attitudes, and perceptions. Thus, qualitative methodology permits a deeper understanding of the attitudinal and emotional concomitants of the research topics while providing a more nuanced exploration of the coexistence of the phenomena examined herein. This may uncover possible patterns and/or shed light on new areas for further research.

I. Research Design Evolution

A. Initial Design

My research design centered on traveling to Guatemala and Tajikistan to interview emigrant widows in both countries. I planned to interview ten to twenty emigrant widows in each country divided among two or three regions within each

country. This would give me good qualitative data on the experience of emigrant widowhood. I hoped that it might also provide a large enough sample size across multiple regions within each country to garner data on education level, age at marriage, husband's level of education, etc., which I could potentially use for quantitative measurements.

As I developed contacts with social workers and/or gender experts to facilitate these key informant interviews in each country, I noted that the contacts themselves had a wealth of observations on the lives of these emigrant widows. All had earned university degrees in majors related to women's issues and/or had years of experience working with women's issues, and often with the emigrant widows themselves. They had much insight into sociocultural, political, economic, and judicial factors affecting the lives of emigrant widows, so I began considering doing a second set of interviews with these subject matter experts. This would contextualize the data gleaned from the key informant interviews and perhaps point to broader patterns that might indicate systemic patterns issues.

B. Tajikistan

I developed contacts with key informants and subject matter experts along two different routes in Tajikistan. One was via a Tajikistani gender expert, Berina[1], whose name appeared in various reports and articles I found during my research on the progress on women's rights in the country. I obtained her email address and contacted her. Due to her limited English, she referred me to an English-speaking associate at another NGO, Aleah[2], who is also a women's rights advocate in Tajikistan. Aleah had suggestions for contacting NGOs/non-profits in Tajikistan that might facilitate interviews with key

[1] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.
[2] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.

informants. Additionally, a personal connection in the non-profit world referred me to a social worker in Tajikistan, Farhad[3], whose non-governmental organization (NGOt) works with emigrant widows there. Farhad and I developed a plan for me to go to Tajikistan during the summer of 2020. He would facilitate my interviews of about 20 "emigrant widows" in three villages, each in a different region outside the capital, as well as provide a translator and driver, for which I would pay him. I would bring the emigrant widows gifts of groceries as well to compensate their time.

C. Guatemala

Here also, a personal connection introduced me via email to a pastor in Guatemala with whom her church had done mission work. After several email and phone conversations with the pastor, he got me in contact with two NGOs (NGOg1 and NGOg2) that he thought could facilitate interviews with emigrant widows. During a study abroad program in Guatemala for several weeks in July and August 2019, I established relationships with personnel in these two NGOs, each in a different region of Guatemala. They agreed to facilitate interviews with emigrant widows when I returned during the summer of 2020 to conduct fieldwork. In both cases, I would provide around $15.00 worth of groceries to each emigrant widow to compensate her time. Additionally, while I was there in 2019, the pastor's non-profit organization and NGOg1 provided opportunities for me to speak with a total of three emigrant widow for whom their organizations provided services. I used these opportunities as a beta study from which to develop the interview protocol for my fieldwork.

[3] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.

D. Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

Based on coursework and research papers I had completed in Latin American Government and Politics, Geography of the Former Soviet Union, Gender and Sexuality in Latin America, Gender Politics in the Islamic World, and Supervised Research in Central Asian History and Culture, along with the beta study I conducted during my study abroad program in Guatemala, I developed an interview protocol for key informants (see appendix A). This contained an introduction and statement requesting verbal informed consent, including a brief explanation of my research, a notice of confidentiality, information on how to contact me or the university if the interviewee wanted/needed to, and a disclaimer of non-affiliation to the university of the NGO facilitating the interview and of its workers. The interview protocol itself covered five broad areas of questions to ask each emigrant widow, aside from basic demographic information such as name and age:

1. Husband/Significant Other – how/where she met him, his education and family, the interviewee's freedom to marry/be with him, and so on;
2. Husband/Partner's Emigration –circumstances leading to his migration, his destination, length of time gone, his plans to return (if any), changes in the interviewee's relationship with him or his family, etc.;
3. Work/Finances – if the interviewee works/has worked to earn money, any changes to the family financial situation since her partner's emigration, any changes to who makes family financial decisions, and so forth;

4. Social (includes culture/religion) – cultural norms for gender roles, any role of religion in in the interviewee's life and in establishing/supporting gender roles, if the interviewee has social/emotional support, the interviewee's perception of her ease/difficulty of life, etcetera; and

5. Perception of society – whether the interviewee believes there are socioeconomic differences among the people where the interviewee lives, how she accounts for those differences, her perception of crime where she lives, her trust in law enforcement/the judicial system, whether she knows of the occurrence of domestic violence in her society, and so forth.

Each broad topic contained several main questions subdivided into more detailed questions. The idea was not to ask every single question on the questionnaire, but rather to use it as a framework from which to conduct semi-structured interviews, referring to it as a tool to probe interviewee responses for further details. In December 2019, I submitted to the university's Institutional Review Board the interview protocol with a research proposal containing my research design as outlined above as an exempt study. I received approval to conduct my proposed fieldwork in January 2020.

E. COVID-19

In February and March of 2020, the novel coronavirus began sweeping across the globe, including the United States. I closely monitored how the governments in Tajikistan and Guatemala were handling the pandemic, especially with regards to allowing international travelers within their borders. Soon, it became apparent that I could not rely on traveling to either country to conduct fieldwork. I also did not expect to be able to

interview any of the emigrant widows via videoconference, since the ones I planned to interview live in village or rural areas with little Internet connection. Therefore, I developed a second interview protocol (see Appendix B) with which to conduct videoconference interviews with the gender experts and social workers with whom I had been communicating, as well as any others to whom they could refer me. The second protocol covered the same topics as the first one but reflected the higher-level perspective of people who worked with multiple families of migrant laborers or related policy issues. I submitted to the IRB the second interview protocol as an addendum to my original proposal. The IRB replied that the original approval covered the second protocol, since the topic areas of the questionnaire are identical.

I communicated with my contacts in both countries, requesting interviews with each of them. After I explained my revised fieldwork plan, Farhad agreed not only to have three of his social workers who work with emigrant widows do interviews, but also to get three emigrant widows themselves to come to the NGO's offices for interviews. Additionally, both gender experts in Tajikistan, Aleah and Berina, were willing to interview with me, as were the contacts from both NGOs in Guatemala. My NGOg2 contact said that he would prefer that I interview two of his employees rather than him, since they are the ones who work directly with the emigrant widows. Both he and Jocelyn, the contact from NGOg1, also offered to visit different emigrant widows in their respective regions, taking their mobile phones to facilitate videoconference interviews and interpreting for those who did not speak Spanish.

The COVID-19 pandemic thus affected the nature of my research. Travel restrictions limited access to the study's demographic of interest, greatly reducing my

sample size. The study became purely qualitative, an ethnographic portrait of emigrant widows in Tajikistan and Guatemala. Nonetheless, it implicates systemic conditions in both countries as contributing to the socioeconomic difficulties facing emigrant widows.

II. Fieldwork

First, as noted in the introduction, both Guatemala and Tajikistan are areas known for high levels of corruption. Repeatedly, contacts in both countries expressed safety concerns about discussing topics related to crime, corruption, domestic violence, and politics. Because of the perceived high level of risk, before each interview I assured all participants of anonymity. For both countries, I am assigning key informants to an age range rather listing their exact age. To further protect participants' identities, I am using pseudonyms for some towns, villages, and regions, and/or intentionally giving non-specific descriptions of villages, towns, or other regions. In three cases, however, the actual locations are identified for the following reasons:

1. Guatemala—a social worker sent me a report regarding women's health and living conditions for which his/her organization had participated in gathering data. S/he gave me permission to use it after I explained that it is included in the "References" section of this study and names the location.

2. Guatemala—to highlight the cultural aspect of some of the violence there, I cite a news article, listed in the "References" section. The article discusses a Guatemalan town's prosperity and evangelicalism. The town was named by another social worker, who indicated that the town lynches people even though it is known for its Christianity. I sent the social worker the article, and s/he acknowledged it as the town s/he had told me about.

3. Tajikistan—I use the name of the capital city, Dushanbe. There are many organizations based there, and it is the most populated area of the country, making it difficult to identify a particular individual or organization.

A. Tajikistan

In Tajikistan, Farhad, a native Tajikistani, facilitated interviews with six Tajikistani women. Three were social workers who work with emigrant widows, but in two cases, these workers had a husband or father who had engaged migrant labor, and they also gave responses to questions from personal experience. The other three were emigrant widows receiving assistance from Farhad's organization. I conducted individual interviews with each of the six interviewees. Another NGO associate was present for each interview to interpret between English and Russian or Tajik. As a Tajikistani woman, the interpreter occasionally also contributed to responses to questions from her experience. Farhad was present part of the time for some of the interviews and added his response to some of the conversation. I had sent him $500.00 via Western Union; $100 was for his assistance and use of facilities for the interviews, $100.00 was for the translator, and each interviewee received $50.00.

The eleven-hour time difference between Texas and Tajikistan made it difficult to schedule interviews while NGO workers are in more remote villages during the Tajikistan day. Therefore, the interviewees were all from Dushanbe, the outskirts, or nearby villages and went to the NGO's location in Dushanbe during the Tajikistan evening for the interviews. Interviews were conducted via Zoom and were recorded; upon being informed of the nature and confidentiality of the research, all participants gave verbal consent to being interviewed and recorded. The recordings were transcribed

by transcriptionists who signed a confidentiality agreement, and I used the transcriptions as fieldnotes, coding them as explained in the following section. Table 1.1 on page 17 shows the age range and general location of each interviewee, as well as marital status, number of children, etc. For confidentiality and security purposes, interviewees are identified by pseudonym; village names and location descriptions are not used.

I conducted interviews with the English-speaking Tajik gender expert and her colleague, my original contact, via Google Meet. Technical difficulties made Zoom meetings difficult in both cases, so I was unable to record the interviews. Both gender experts gave informed consent to being interviewed. I took extensive field notes for both interviews. I sent my field notes to the English-speaking gender expert (Aleah) for corrections and clarifications, which she made and returned to me. In the case of the non-English-speaking gender expert (Berina), the professor serving as my second reader interpreted, and she also took notes. I sent her my field notes for corrections and clarifications, which she made and returned to me. Both gender experts are native Tajik women, college-educated, with high-level knowledge of gender and family politics in Tajikistan. Both are involved with working with a coalition of NGOs in Tajikistan to advocate for more progressive gender and family policy in the country, and one has worked extensively with the United Nations on the topic of women's rights in the region.

B. Guatemala

Here, the social worker from NGOg1 (Jocelyn) facilitated interviews with seven emigrant widows. Jocelyn would carry them about $15.00 of groceries and then use her phone so that I could conduct the interview. I did some of the interviews on Zoom and some on Google Meet. On the first three, which were conducted back-to-back on a single

day, I had difficulty with my Zoom account, so we used her Zoom account. These interviews were therefore not recorded. Another of these seven interviews was not recorded, not due to technical difficulties, but because one emigrant widow agreed to the interview on the condition that she not be recorded. For these four unrecorded interviews, I took extensive fieldnotes. For any clarifications I needed upon reviewing and filling in the notes from memory after the interview, I corresponded via email or WhatsApp with the social worker, who had remained present during the interviews. For the three interviews I recorded, I paid transcriptionists who signed a confidentiality agreement to transcribe the recordings, which I used as field notes. I coded all field notes as indicated in the following section.

The emigrant widows' levels of Spanish varied. I directly interviewed those who spoke fluent Spanish, with Jocelyn present to introduce us and clarify questions or responses for me or the interviewee, as necessary. Several emigrant widows spoke only their native Mayan language or limited Spanish, so Jocelyn, who speaks the same Mayan language, interpreted for some or all of those interviews, as necessary. For confidentiality and security purposes, interviewees, village, and regions are identified by pseudonyms. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 show basic demographic information.

Table 1.1: Demographic Information of Samples

Emigrant Widow	Country	Age Range	Number of Children	Average Child age
Amalia	Guatemala	36-45	4	15-21
Ester	Guatemala	46-55	4	10-14
Eva	Guatemala	46-55	7	19-26
Graciela	Guatemala	26-35	3	6-12
Juana	Guatemala	36-45	3	15-21
Liliana	Guatemala	46-55	5	15-24
Marlene	Guatemala	26-35	2	0-7
Afsaneh	Tajikistan	18-25	0	0
Aryana	Tajikistan	46-55	2	26-35
Dilruba	Tajikistan	36-45	2	13-17
Mahtob	Tajikistan	36-45	4	6-13

Table 1.2*: Comparison of Samples' Demographics

	Mean Age		Median # Children		Mean Child Age	
	Guatemala:	***Tajikistan:***	***Guatemala:***	***Tajikistan:***	***Guatemala:***	***Tajikistan:***
	41.5	38.5	4	2	14.5	14.5
Adjusted[†]	41.5	43.5	4	2	16.5	19.5

** All numbers rounded to nearest whole. Means are of an age range that resulted from calculating means of the higher limits and of the lower limits of all age ranges for a country.*

[†]Compared to fellow interviewees, one woman per country is younger and/or has either fewer, relatively younger or no children. Adjusted averages calculated without their data are shown.

I also conducted interviews with Jocelyn and two social workers from NGOg2, Manuela and Anastasia. All three are Mayan women who grew up in communities observing the phenomenon of labor migration and its effects on migrants' family members who do not emigrate. Viewing the domestic abuse and systemic and cultural repression of indigenous women around her motivated Jocelyn to pursue a university degree in Humanities/Social Work. Manuela and Anastasia belonged to families who received assistance from NGOg2, for which they now work. Manuela and Anastasia both

had technical difficulties, and in Anastasia's case, poor Internet connectivity, which necessitated two separate interviews with each. All three social workers gave informed consent to being interviewed and to having the interviews recorded. Paid transcriptionists who had signed a confidentiality agreement transcribed the recordings from the five interviews with the three social workers, which I used as field notes and coded as per the coding section below.

I paid Jocelyn $275.00 to cover the use of her time and resources as well as the cost of the groceries she bought for each of the seven emigrant widows. I sent my NGOg2 contact $200.00 to pay Manuela and Anastasia $100.00 each for their time. He informed me that Anastasia had recently emigrated to the United States with her husband. With my consent, he gave the $100.00 allocated to Anastasia to her parents, who he said are caring for her six children.

Recordings and fieldnotes are kept on my password-protected Google Drive. As noted above, any fieldnotes that were shared were only sent to persons present during the interview covered by the set of notes for clarification and correction. I shared recordings and related files only with transcriptionists who signed a confidentiality agreement, and they only received files on interviews that they transcribed.

III. Coding

In talking to social workers, gender experts, and emigrant widows, my goal was to garner information on two broad topics: crime and women's issues. Points of view ranged from a low (personal, individual) level, including the seven emigrant widows in Guatemala and the three emigrant widows in Tajikistan with whom I spoke, to the high-level, broader viewpoint of gender experts working at the national/international level. In

between were social workers who work with emigrant widows. In some case, the workers themselves had either first- or second-hand experience with having a husband or father leave for labor migration. All of the social workers had, at a minimum, grown up in an environment where this phenomenon is common and therefore had observed it not only from a professional/academic perspective, but as a member of the society in which it occurs. Gender experts and social workers in Tajikistan had a four-year university degree. As mentioned above, one of the social workers in Guatemala, Jocelyn, did as well; the other two, Manuela and Anastasia, had a public-school education (eleven years), training on women's issues from the organization they work for, and several years' experience working with indigenous women, including emigrant widows. Jocelyn serves as Gender Adviser for the region at her organization, and she has years of experience working in different regions in Guatemala for several NGOs that focus on social problems.

For questions regarding **crime**, I looked for any insight into three different categories: possible ***systemic factors*** for crime, any evidence or knowledge of ***drug trafficking and other crime***, and any evidence or knowledge of ***gender violence***. For ***systemic factors***, I listened for words that indicated the interviewees felt that the *economy*, *corruption*, or the efficiency or effectiveness of the *legal system* contributed to crime. Regarding ***drug trafficking and other crime***, I asked questions to elicit knowledge of what *types of crime* they knew about (e.g., drugs, extorsion, robbery, etc.) and in *what regions* (urban, rural, area of residence, country-wide) crime occurs. On ***gender violence***, I categorized responses on gender violence by *type* (domestic or other, physical or psychological) and *motivation* (economic, emotional, etc.).

On interview topics regarding **women's issues**, I looked at four categories. The first, ***systemic repression***, responses were coded based on whether the interviewee discussed the *historical* roots of repression – e.g., in Guatemala, the Spanish colonizers' taking of indigenous women as domestic slaves; *educational* repression – e.g., in Tajikistan, village families only allowing girls to go to school for the government-mandated nine years instead of the full public school curriculum (eleven years); *cultural* repression, for example in Tajikistan, the treatment of wives by their in-laws as the family slave; and finally, *political* repression. The latter addressed the political and legal treatment of women, including, among other things, laws on domestic violence. There was also a brief mention of the representation of women in government.

Other aspects of women's issues that I looked at were the ***economy***, ***effects of abandonment***, and ***empowerment***. The second women's issues category, the ***economy***, I addressed from two perspectives, specifically considering the situations of emigrant widows. The first was whether the economy contributed to an *emigration push factor* that leads men to emigrate. The second was the *labor status* of women – what is expected of them as far as contributing to family finances and what jobs are available to them. I use the term ***abandonment*** to reference the physical absence of the husband/significant other, even if he maintains contact with the emigrant widow and/or their children. On this topic, I asked questions not only about the women themselves, but about the children. The rationale for this is that, since in most cases the women are left as caretakers of the children, any effect of abandonment on the children would also affect the mother. I classified responses according to whether the effects are *emotional/social* or *financial/physical*. Finally, one thing I noted in conversations with interviewees at

different perspective levels in both countries was the topic of women's ***empowerment***. This occurred generally in *emotional* and *economic* ways. Table 1.3 summarizes the coding protocol:

Table 1.3: Coding Protocol

1. Crime	**2. Women**
a. Possible systemic factors	***a. Systemic/indigenous repression***
i. Economy	*i. Historical*
ii. Corruption	*ii. Educational*
iii. Legal system (effectual, efficient)	*iii. Cultural*
	iv. Political
b. Drugs/crime	***b. Economy***
i. Type (drugs, extorsion, robbery, other)	*i. Push factor/family financial*
ii. region (urban/rural, area residing/country-wide)	*ii. Labor status – women*
c. Violence against Women	***c. Effects of abandonment***
i. Type (domestic/other, physical/ psychological)	*i. Emotional/social*
ii. Motivation – economic, emotional, etc.	*ii. Financial/physical*
	d. Empowerment
	i. Emotional
	ii. Economic

In many cases, topics overlapped. For example, an indigenous Guatemalan woman whose husband had stopped sending money found herself in financial straits. She began earning money by doing other people's laundry because, in her words "I go out and work so that [my children] can study." Before her husband left, she had not engaged in wage-earning labor, nor had she thought she ever would. In this series of responses, her husband's ***abandonment*** had a *financial/physical* effect. At the same time, these

responses gave some insight into women's *labor status* under the ***economy*** umbrella, when considered in the context of responses on the topic by other interviewees.

CHAPTER 2

Crime, Violence, and Migration: Economic Symptoms of Corruption – Tajikistan

> *[She says,] "Yes, we have crime . . . . Physical violence like – rape. Rape and theft. Theft and robbery . . . Yes, of course [there is drugs and corruption]"—like she wants to say but she cannot say, you know?*
>
> – Interpreter (interpreting and commenting on an emigrant widow's reply to interview questions), *Interview with the author, September 2020*.

As small as Tajikistan is, surrounded by such geopolitically important neighbors such as Afghanistan and China, it too has a disturbing role on the world stage: it is a ship-through route for much of the world's heroin and opium from Afghanistan to markets in Russia and beyond. As such, one might expect a high rate of all types of crime and violence, yet statistically, this is not the case. Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that statistics do not accurately reflect the levels of illegal activity in the country, and that some types of violence are not viewed as criminal in much of Tajikistani society. At the same time, Tajikistan is globally known for the international labor migration of its population. Up to one-third of Tajikistan's labor force participates in labor migration, Russia being the chief destination (Hegland 2010:17). This dynamic puts Russia among the top three sending countries globally of migrant remittances, while Tajikistan's GDP has one of the three highest percentages in the world of migrant remittances (Leal 2020). Is there any connection between Tajikistan's drug trade, high migration rate, and hidden crime and violence? This chapter will look at different intersections of several of the same dynamics underpin each of these phenomena:

1. a weak economy with high poverty and few or underpaid jobs;

2. a mistrust of government that, combined with adherence to pre-Soviet regional traditions, hampers implementation of certain laws; and

3. corruption, fostered not only by poverty but by a) a view of governmental position as a means of financial gain, and b) a strong culture of family loyalty that also prevents reporting of some types of crime and violence.

In this chapter, I will look at the history of Tajikistan's illicit drug trafficking; the drug trade, corruption, and whether these two dynamics intersect; Tajikistan's economy, from the perspective of widespread poverty, labor migration, and drug trafficking; other types of crime in Tajikistan; and finally, violence against women.

I. Civil War and the Birth of the Drug Trade

The Soviet Union's demise gave way to a brutal war in Tajikistan between two main factions, the Popular Front of Tajikistan (PFT), or neo-communist government, and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) (Engvall 2014:50-51). The UTO was a conglomerate of Islamist and pro-democracy forces (Paoli, et al 2009:184). Yet, the PFT and UTO each comprised smaller groups with competing interests (Engvall 2014:51). Not only that, but:

> as the conflict evolved, a cacophony of armed groups emerged, some . . . based on patronage networks, others based on parts of the dissolved former Soviet police and security structures, and yet others pure criminal gangs with a history of illicit activities since the late days of the Soviet Union . . . . [T]he conflict was . . . a local turf war over which elite would control power and resources in the post-Soviet system (Engvall 2014:51).

As the country tore itself apart, the government and its authority effectively ceased to exist, facilitating the rise of drug-trafficking opportunities (Paoli, et al 2009:184). These opportunities became one of the main ways for both the PFT and the UTO to finance their war efforts, and they justified doing so as a patriotic exigency (de Danieli 2013:145). Tajik warlords gained much of the real power in the country, controlling the PFT's military. Then, in 1997 the United Nations brokered a peace agreement between the two main factions, which slated thirty percent of all governmental positions to former UTO leaders, whose militias were incorporated into the Tajik military and law enforcement agencies (Paoli, et al 2009:185). Examples of warlord-turned-government official from each side include: from the PFT, Yakub Salimov, simultaneously known as Minister of the Interior, former leader of a paramilitary force, and founder of Tajikistan's oldest major drug cartel; and Mirzo Ziyoyev, a former UTO commander with ties to the UTO's Afghan supporters, who became Minister for Emergency Situations, and who is widely thought to be involved with both a terrorist organization and drug smuggling (Engvall 2014:53-54). The government tolerates if not protects these types of traffickers (de Danieli 2013:145-146). Indeed, the nexus between government and criminal organizations solidified once the civil war ended, for "organized crime did not need to fight its way into the state structures, it simply became part of them through the peace negotiations" (Engvall 57).

II. Corruption: Ties to Poverty and Drug Trafficking

Corruption in Central Asia carries little stigma, as it is often connected to the region's traditional loyalties to clan and/or extended families (Paoli et al, 2009:187). This contributes to making Tajikistan one of the world's most corrupt countries, according to

Transparency International, an organization that polls experts and businesspeople to determine the perceived level of public corruption in 180 countries and territories. In 2018, Tajikistan ranked 152, with one being least corrupt and 180 being most corrupt (Transparency International 2018).

Several Tajikistani interviewees confirmed that corruption in Tajikistan is widespread. Social worker Aleah gave several examples of how corruption can exacerbate families' financial burdens. Public school, mandated by the government for Tajikistani children, is supposed to be free, yet often children are asked to contribute to pay for a teacher's birthday or a holiday. Corruption can drive up healthcare costs, too, she noted, or officials may charge "informal fees for registering a birth or obtaining a birth certificate." (Aleah, interview and personal communications with author, June 2020). In the words of an NGO worker, corruption "[is] easy in this part of the world . . . . Nobody talk [sic] about it" (Farhad[4], interview with author August 2020).

Indeed, no interviewee spoke of *personal* experience with corruption except for Aryana[5], an emigrant widow. Even then, it was a decades-old event that happened during the civil war. One faction took Aryana's husband prisoner because of money he was bringing back from Russia, but he managed to hide the money and escape after a couple of days. Aryana may have felt more open to share this story since it happened over 20 years ago before Tajikistan had a stable government. Nonetheless, Aryana did say that she does not trust law enforcement. According to her, the police only help people with money. They side with the victim or the perpetrator depending on who pays them,

[4] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.
[5] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.

because police officers' salaries are "very low . . . . [T]hey prefer to take money and to close their eyes" (Aryana, interview with author October 2020).

Still, several interviewees had a positive view of Tajikistani law enforcement. Dilruba[6], a social worker, said people generally feel safe going to the police for crimes other than domestic violence. Afsaneh[7], an emigrant widow, expressed a trust in police if she or a family member were to report being victim of a crime, based on her observation of the police fining a neighbor who was fighting with another neighbor. Similarly, because of the police's response when her brother reported her first husband's violence towards her, emigrant widow Mahtob[8] expressed confidence in law enforcement. (It should be noted that Mahtob comes from an educated family, and she mentioned that her [now deceased] brothers had helped her financially even after her second marriage. Additionally, she said her father forced her to divorce her abusive, alcoholic first husband after the hospitalization and death of her child. With such family involvement in Mahtob's wellbeing, it is conceivable that her family members would have paid the police to help in her case, perhaps without her knowledge. However, no such determination can be made without further information.)

Other Tajikistani interviewees discussed bureaucratic corruption outside of law enforcement. One social worker, Niloufar[9], also implied corruption's relation to the drug trade. When I asked, based on what she had said, how some people in Tajikistan end up rich through the drug trade and some end up in jail, she chuckled and said it is because

[6] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.
[7] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.
[8] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.
[9] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.

the country is full of miracles. I mentioned that my research in Central America indicates that law enforcement at times collaborates with narcotraffickers, asking if a similar situation exists in Tajikistan. She replied, "Traditionally, it's very [sic] dark side of it, and it's not good to talk about this . . . . Here it's not about police [sic], but you know, the higher ones." This fits with a gender expert's comment that she believed most trafficking occurs in higher circles (interviews with author, June-October 2020).

A review of relevant literature, however, indicates that corruption is endemic at all levels of Tajikistani government and law enforcement (de Danieli 2013:147). While corruption predates the illegal drug trade and was well-established in Soviet times, it has accelerated the drug industry's growth. At the same time, the drug industry's growth has further entrenched corruption, now financed by drug traffickers. In the 1990s, Russian troops defended Tajikistan's Afghan border, but their low wages made them susceptible to bribes, if not outright participation in drug smuggling activities. The transfer of border control to Tajikistani troops did not tighten security—it did the opposite (Paoli, et al 2009:185-187).

Evidence disclosed in my field interviews highlighted the vulnerability to corruption of Tajikistan's troops and their inadequacy to guard the borders. Emigrant widow Aryana discussed how the Tajikistani army conscripted one of her sons. She said that he has been stationed at Tajikistan's borders with at least two other countries. Her sons will not say why they do not want to be in the army, Aryana observed, but boys [in general] know that they do not want to go. Aryana opined that it is because they are treated badly, adding that the army does not pay conscripts, they barely feed them, and they beat them. Her son has lost weight and looks sick since he joined the army, and it is

the family who provides him with warm clothes, not the military. At this point in the interview, the interpreter, Yasmina[10], also a native Tajikistani, interjected that she, Yasmina, has a friend in the military. Yasmina said that she has observed that compared to Russian or American soldiers, Tajikistani soldiers look frail and inadequate to protect the borders. When I asked Aryana if her son ever talks about what he or anyone does in the army, she did not want to talk about it. She did reiterate, however, that bigger soldiers beat the conscripts, and that her son had lost his previously beautiful singing voice. Since joining the army, his voice has gotten rough. He can no longer sing (Aryana and Yasmina, interview with author October 2020). Aryana's story, along with Yasmina's observation, supports the idea that the Tajikistani military at the lower levels is at worst ripe for corruption and participation in criminal activity for profit, or at best, unable to adequately patrol the borders. However, emigrant widow Afasaneh's statement, noted in the next section about her husband's stint in the military, indicates that even officers do not receive adequate pay. Thus, higher levels of military personnel may also be vulnerable to using illegal means to supplement their income.

If Afsaneh's, Aryana's and Yasmina's stories reflect a broader reality, it is easy to see how a unique dynamic has arisen between the illicit drug trade and legitimate government forces/counter-narcotic efforts. Academic literature details how the drug industry evolved from its early days of individual dealers/smugglers and small organizations to a system of large, better organized mafias. These now dominate Tajikistan's drug industry and work hand-in-glove with the country's law enforcement (Engvall 2014:56). While criminal charges related to corruption and drug trafficking

[10] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.

rarely make it as far as court, even the Tajikistani ambassador and the trade representative to Kazakhstan, as well as a former deputy defense minister, have faced charges, demonstrating that the illicit industry has infiltrated even the highest ranks of government (Paoli, et al 2009:187). The few other politicians who have faced charges for involvement in drug-trafficking appear to be perceived political rivals of President Rahmon (Engvall 2014:60). Other officials followed the president's lead, using law enforcement to eliminate rivals and consolidate power over their slice of the drug trade. At the same time, drug mafias also began laundering money and engaging in legal economic activities, becoming "powerful political-economic actors" (de Danieli 2013:146).

Niloufar alluded to this development when I asked about the two very different outcomes that she had described for Tajikistanis involved in the drug trade. After wryly explaining that Tajikistan is full of miracles, she and Yasmina discussed it. They responded that they do not know how some traffickers end up in trouble with the law and others get rich, but they conjectured that some invest their drug money in legitimate businesses, and if law enforcement questions their prosperity, they probably claim to have spent time working in Russia (interview with author September 2020).

III. Poverty, Migration, and Drug Trafficking

In Soviet times, Tajikistan's poverty made it heavily reliant on subsidies from the Kremlin (Engvall 2014:50). Upon independence, the civil war devastated its economy, and even as recently as 2014, Tajikistan remained the poorest country in the Commonwealth of Independent States (Paoli, et al 2009:182-183). Every Tajikistani I interviewed mentioned poverty and the lack of jobs and/or adequately paid jobs in the

country. This no doubt contributes to the Tajikistani's economy heavy reliance on migrant remittances. Highlighting this dependence of Tajikistanis on labor migration, Aleah mentioned high stress levels among the population during the COVID-19 pandemic because of joblessness due to border closures. Many Tajikistanis who would normally migrate to Russia to work could not.

The corruption that, as noted in Section 2, can exacerbate the poverty driving migration often plays a direct role in the budgets of emigrants' families. When discussing the exploitation by public officials that can strain citizens' finances, Aleah made her remarks in the context of questions regarding the families of migrants. For instance, while the fees imposed on school children for special events may be as low as [the equivalent of] $2.00-$5.00 USD, she observed that this is a lot of money for the family of a migrant. Also, when coupled with long distances to government offices and late registration fees, corruption can preclude families from registering their children, leading to up to perhaps 50,000 "invisible children . . . many from migrant families" (interview with author, June 2020). Thus, corruption can intensify the economic deficiencies that push labor migration from Tajikistan.

Interviews bore out the financial pressures pushing Tajikistanis to migrate. The husband of one emigrant widow, Afsaneh, had studied at the military academy in Moscow on a scholarship, but his salary, "like all the militaries, they—their salary is very low . . . . [H]is salary was 1000 somoni, which is $100 in a month" (Afsaneh, interview with author October 2020). After five years working in Tajikistan, Afsaneh's husband emigrated to Russia to work in construction with one of his brothers. They both send

money to their family, with whom Afsaneh lives (interview with author, September 2020).

Aryana, another emigrant widow, discussed how her husband, who is in his fifties, supports the family from Russia. He has spent varying amounts of time there during their marriage of over three decades, coming home to stay anywhere from one month to five years before returning to Russia. For a while he would spend the winters in Tajikistan and the rest of the year working in Russia, but now he stays years at a time. Aryana said she wants her husband to come home to Tajikistan because he is getting older and only has the use of one hand due to a work injury. Nonetheless, she affirmed that the family needs at least one person working in Russia because "here the economy is bad." Her oldest son, who studied law in Russia and works for the Tajikistani government, does not make much money, and her youngest son is an unpaid conscript in the Tajikistani army. The plan is for the youngest son to work in Russia when he completes his military service so that her husband can come home. Aryana had mentioned that her husband took out a loan for his oldest son to go to university. I asked if her husband would still have needed to work in Russia if he had not done that. She replied that even though her husband is a trained electrician, he could not make enough in Tajikistan to pay for her sons' weddings or even regular expenses (Aryana, interview with the author October 2020).

Cultural expectations may increase a Tajikistani family's financial burden. Yasmina, the interpreter in an interview, explained the obligation Tajik tradition lays on a family for its sons' weddings: The groom's family must pay a minimum of $2000 USD to the parents of the bride, plus the expense of the wedding itself. Per son, she estimated a

Tajikistani family spends $5000 USD on a wedding. Yasmina added that families often get a loan from the bank, a relative, or a friend. The son then goes to Russia to work to pay off the debt. Alternatively, he may go once he leaves school to earn enough money to marry. Then, upon marriage in Tajikistan, he may return to Russia to earn money to build a house. Wanting to build a house separate from the husband's parents can also push men to emigrate. Dilruba expounded on her statement that newlyweds live with the husband's parents for at least three years, saying that the parents decide after three years if the couple can live separately. This will more likely happen if the mother-in-law loves the wife. In families with multiple sons, the youngest or the oldest one continues to live with his parents after marriage. Laleh explained that in households with multiple sons, once the second one marries, the sons may go to Russia to earn money so that one or more can live separately from their parents.

Despite its illegality, polygamy is another tradition common in Tajikistan that can complicate family finances. Emigrant widow Mahtob said that she is a second wife, so her husband mostly sends money from Russia to his first wife and children. Yet, he left soon after he married Mahtob, because "he didn't earn enough money for both of his families as a [bus] driver" (Mahtob, interview with author September 2020). Had he not taken a second wife, would he have felt a need to go to Russia to earn more money? Perhaps not, yet when discussing emotional violence and crime, Mahtob indicated more than once that poverty and unemployment contribute to both in the country (Mahtob, interview with author September 2020).

In fact, culturally imposed financial burdens notwithstanding, most interviewees indicated that Tajikistan's frail economy has far-reaching effects on daily life. Niloufar, a

social worker, described the difficulties poverty and underemployment have occasioned in her own life and in the country. She wept as she recalled how she missed her father after the civil war and how hard it was to watch her mother eke out a living in his absence. Both parents had post-secondary educations and jobs before the war, yet afterwards, her father could not find work that would support the family. He emigrated to Russia, but in the days before widespread use of money transfer systems such as Western Union, money he sent via people traveling to Tajikistan often did not arrive. Niloufar's mother, an accounting major, could find no work in her field. She resorted to farm labor, earning just enough to feed the family the most basic of food items (Niloufar, interview with author September 2020).

Even now, Niloufar said, jobs are scarce. Unlike other countries, Tajikistan has no factories and must import many of its consumer products. Another social worker, Laleh[11], enlarged on this idea, asserting that unlike in Soviet days, Tajikistan has no access to energy internally to power factories. Prior to independence, the country got its gas and electricity from Uzbekistan, another Soviet state. Laleh estimated that it would take another 20 years before projects to bring hydroelectric power to Tajikistan would have a noticeable effect on the economy (interviews with author August and September 2020). Yet even professional workers face employment difficulties, according to Niloufar, for although people with a university degree can find work, the salary is typically low. Salaries for young people range from $80-$100 a month for Tajikistani employers and $200 a month for international non-governmental organization employers (Niloufar, interview with author September 2020). Dilruba's estimate for a first-year government

[11] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.

employee was even lower - $60-$70 USD. According to her, even educated men who can get such a job must also find work as a laborer to earn "enough" money. "Good" jobs—positions in "good" organizations—go to relatives of existing employees. Later, Dilruba reiterated that Tajikistan suffers from job scarcity even for educated people. Yasmina, the interpreter, at that point added that construction or maintenance work in Russia pays much better than even government jobs in Tajikistan, unless one works for the government for several years. Available jobs in Tajikistan for men that do not require an education include work as electricians, plumbers, repairmen, or loader/transporters. However, Dilruba explained, many men in the villages do not even complete the country's eleven years of public schooling or try to obtain a job in Tajikistan. Instead, they often emigrate to Russia after ninth grade to earn money before marrying (interview with author August 2020). Laleh, expressed a similar notion, that in the villages, the areas from which many men migrate:

> There is nothing. That's why they go to Russia and sending [sic] money from there. Or they live and work in a field, so there is nothing—agriculture . . . . They sell the fruits and vegetables. They buy flour, make bread, yeah. Just, you know, to live one day" (interview with author August 2020).

Thus, for Tajikistanis in urban or rural regions, regardless of education, job scarcity and low wages combine with traditional expectations to make life hard to afford. In fact, Laleh stated that for parents with sons working in Russia, financial worries can outweigh concern even for their own grandchildren. If their son is not sending much money, they may get aggressive with his wife. They may ask her and her children (their grandchildren) to leave the house, or they even lie to their son about her to get him to

divorce her via video chat, thus putting her and their grandchildren out on the street (Laleh, interview with author August 2020).

Yet despite such evidence of widespread economic pressures, Niloufar alluded to the fact that some Tajikistanis have money: from the number of fancy cars and other nice things in the capital, one would never know that "our country is the poorest." Asked how some people afford such things, she stated:

> We have gold here, we probably have gas and everything, but where it goes and how it goes? We don't know. It's a little bit of a political question. We have drugs. . . . . Afghanistan delivering the drugs through Tajikistan to other countries [sic]. Village where I was growing was responsible for all the drugs which come from Afghanistan, and every family in the village there is one man who is in the jail because of the drug in their village [sic]. . . [b]ecause it is one of the ways of earning money (Niloufar, interview with author September 2020).

When I asked for clarification, Niloufar confirmed that drug trafficking continues to occur, that it is illegal, and that she feels that this is how some people get rich (interview with author September 2020).

Tajikistan's economy is, in fact, heavily dependent on the drug trade, perhaps for as much as 30% of its gross domestic product. Important factors contributing to this phenomenon "are geographic proximity and ethnic ties with Afghanistan, as well as the Tajik diasporas in both Afghanistan and Russia that has, since the mid-1990s become the world's third-largest opiate market" (Paoli, Greenfield, Reuter, and Rabkov 2009:182). Ethnic Tajiks live on both sides of the Tajikistani-Afghan border and share clan ties.

These clan ties strengthened during the five-year civil war following the collapse of the Soviet Union, when tens of thousands of Tajiks fled to Afghanistan, the main "supplier" end of the Asian opiate trade. Meanwhile, an estimated 800,000 Tajikistanis regularly migrate between their homeland and Russia (Paoli, et al 2009:182-183). Nonetheless, aside from Niloufar, Tajikistanis I interviewed either avowed no knowledge of the drug trade or expressed reluctance to discuss it. One women's rights advocate briefly noted that although migrant workers could conceivably serve to smuggle drugs knowingly or unknowingly, she knows of no reports or studies that connect the two phenomena (interview with author 2020).

IV. Other Crime

With corruption, the drug trade, and related activities such as money-laundering so deeply rooted and widespread as to be part of Tajikistani society, one might expect an accompanying high crime rate, including criminal violence. Yet, while the Tajikistani drug trade did start off in an explosion of violence, once established, it has become a mostly non-violent enterprise. In contrast to Mexico or other parts of the world, drug trafficking in Tajikistan seems to have helped stabilize the government and led to a decrease in violence (Lewis 2010:43, 46-47). It is true that the drug mafias have diversified into weapons smuggling and human trafficking (Engvall 2014:57). Nonetheless, IndexMundi, an organization that compiles data from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the World Bank, shows that Tajikistan's homicide rate showed a steady decline from the late 1990s. At that time, it was at about or slightly above the U.S. homicide rate of eight deaths per 100,000 people. As of 2015, however, it had decreased to less than two per 100,000 people, well below the U.S. 2015

rate of almost five per 100,000 people. ("Homicides" in this report do not include killing of human beings by other human beings in armed conflicts) (IndexMundi 2017). Similarly, a 2010 report on crime statistics for over 100 countries by the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, Affiliated, with the United Nations (HEUNI) shows Tajikistan in the lowest of four brackets out of 100 countries worldwide for rates on police-reported crimes such as assault, rape, robbery, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and kidnapping (Heiskanen 2010:21, 36-38, 41, 43-45, 47). Table 2 shows the statistics for 2011, the last year Tajikistan reported for all categories of crime listed to the UN.

Table 2: Tajikistan Crime Statistics 2011[12][13]
(*United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2021:DATAUNODC*)

Crime	**Rate (*per 100,000 population*)**	**Rank (*high-low*)**	**Number of Countries Reporting**	**Percentage Comparison**
Burglary	7.98	81	92	.88 Rate lower than almost 90% of reporting countries
Theft	47.66	94	103	.91 Rate lower than over 90% of reporting countries
Car theft	0.62	93	100	.93 Rate lower than over 90% of reporting countries
Robbery	3.74	96	106	.91 Rate lower than over 90% of reporting countries
Kidnapping	2.23	23	98	**.23** **Rate in top 25% of reporting countries**
Serious Assault	48.52	51	101	***.50*** ***In top half of reporting countries; mid-range***
Sexual Violence	2.47	88	100	.88 Rate lower than almost 90% of reporting countries
Homicide	*1.64*	*108*	*163*	*.66* *Rate lower than over two-thirds of reporting countries*

[12] Data is from 2011 since it is the last year for which both Tajikistan and Guatemala reported statistics to the UN in all categories of crime mentioned in this thesis.
[13] See Index A for a comparison of 2011 statistics in Guatemala, Tajikistan, and the United States.

Field interviews mostly bore out this data. Key informants and subject matter experts alike mostly professed no knowledge of crime in the country or expressed that there was little in the regions in which they lived. Laleh affirmed that Dushanbe has more crime than villages, which have little. Afsaneh and Mahtob mentioned learning via television that there is crime in the country in places other than where they live, but the interpreter told me that Mahtob seemed reluctant to say more about it. Mahtob had also mentioned that her first husband often used marijuana, which is illegal in Tajikistan (interviews with author June-October 2020; Sensi Seeds 2020). Yasmina also told me that in the previous year, there had been more stories regarding incidents of child sexual abuse, perhaps because the news media had become more active. The only other reference to specific illegal activity that surfaced during my fieldwork in Tajikistan occurred when Farhad and Yasmina were explaining that a new law, motivated by the fact that religious leaders often speak against politicians, prohibits anyone under the age of 18 from attending religious services. Given Tajikistan's proximity to Afghanistan, I asked if the law could have been motivated by fears of terrorist influence. Both Farhad and Yasmina emphatically affirmed that this was the case, before quickly adding that it was better not to discuss the topic (interviews with author August-September 2020).

How can a country with so much corruption and large-scale crime so entrenched not have higher rates of crime? Given repeated reluctance on the part of interviewees to discuss crime and corruption, Tajikistan's low crime statistics may better reflect a lack of reporting and/or government transparency than a lack of illegal activity. The few instances of criminal activity mentioned above by interviewees hint at such a disparity. Reluctance to report crime may partly stem from Tajikistan's history as part of Soviet

Union. Under Soviet rule, the Communist Party wielded the legal system to achieve its goals, which varied by situation and depended on who was involved. The average citizen, however, viewed the law as the government's tool, not an institution s/he could appeal to for protection or redress. (Hendley 1997:230-31). As for official transparency, gender expert Aleah's[14] assertion that the government suppressed news media coverage of the COVID-19 situation in Tajikistan until the WHO visited demonstrates the current regime's disinclination to openness about problems within the country (interview with author June 2020). Additionally, Laleh noted two other factors that could contribute to Tajikistan's apparent lack of crime. One, its small territory makes it easier for law enforcement to control. Her second explanation coincided with Dilrubah's: in villages, people who live near each other are related. Thus, family ties keep the crime rate down.

Expanding on this second rationale, various interviewees discussed the willingness of Tajikistanis, especially in villages and rural areas, to break or ignore laws regarding family matters such as legal marriage age, required schooling for girls (in more remote areas), the prohibition against polygamy, and so forth. As mentioned in Section 3, Dilruba had also identified family ties to an existing employee of an organization as a prerequisite for good paying jobs (interviews with author August 2020). Moreover, Paoli, et al, in their 2009 article, connected extended family and clan loyalties to widespread corruption in Central Asia and its relative acceptability (187). In the following section, I will show that academic sources and my own field research highlight the reluctance of women to report crimes by family members. Therefore, not only does loyalty to family have high currency in Tajikistan, but many Tajikistanis feel that family matters lie

[14] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.

outside the government's purview. Consequently, family ties conceivably preclude some crimes (e.g., one does not steal from a family member) and cause others to go unreported. In fact, HEUNI's report cautioned that not all crimes get reported, particularly, in many countries, rape and other violent crimes (Heiskanen 2010:34).

V. Violence Against Women

Lack of reporting alone, however, does not fully account for low levels of violence. For example, when focusing on violence against women, the only data available are from the 2000 report of the WHO survey (Turkhanova 2013:140). At that time, the report showed over one-third of women said that they had experienced physical violence from a relative before adulthood, and almost the same percentage had experienced some form of violence from a non-relative in childhood. Half of females over the age of 15 reported sexual, physical, or psychological violence from a relative, "including 47% who had experienced sexual abuse from their husbands." Many married women also reported physical abuse at the hands of their in-laws (World Health Organization 2000:26, 15).

Have times changed? My fieldwork uncovered varying views. Yasmina, the interpreter, discussed how she and other women have been shunned or harassed on the street for not wearing a hijab, wearing jeans, or otherwise not covering their bodies "appropriately." She recalled that one of her friends even had rocks thrown at her by men at a mosque that she walked past. However, she noted that since the passage of the law referenced above barring minors from attending religious services, things have improved to the point that women can wear what they want, at least in Dushanbe. As for domestic violence, emigrant widow Mahtob believes that it has declined, but she based her belief on her own experience: her first husband, whom she divorced almost two decades ago,

beat her, but her second (current) husband of 10 years does not. In contrast, social worker Laleh asserted that domestic violence is widespread in all parts of the country, rural and urban. Perpetrators, she said, are mostly husbands and mothers-in-law, but can include other relatives, such as sisters-in-law. Gender expert Aleah said that there was a feeling that, since many migrant workers were forced to stay in Tajikistan due to border closures, domestic violence levels had risen during the pandemic. She gave two reasons: first, men who act violently towards family members are at home during a time of year when they might normally be absent; and second, stress levels are higher since there are no jobs for these seasonal migrant workers. Berina[15], another gender expert, confirmed that statistics on domestic violence are incomplete, yet she underscored that now, domestic violence, including harsh treatment by mothers-in-law, leads to a large number of divorces (interviews with author June-October 2020).

My fieldwork seemed to corroborate Berina's statement. All three Tajikistani emigrant widows with whom I spoke, Mahtob, Aryana, and Afsaneh, and one social worker, Dilruba, said that their husbands do or had regularly beat them. Dilruba also said that her mother-in-law physically and verbally abused her, and constantly tried to drive a wedge between Dilruba and her husband, even lying to Dilruba's husband about her while he was in Russia. Ultimately, they divorced. At her father's insistence, and with his help, Mahtob also divorced her abusive first husband after one of their daughters died. A stint in the hospital a decade and a half ago caused Aryana to seriously consider getting a divorce because of her husband's abuse. However, her husband had become a Christian while she was in the hospital, and he has not beaten her since then. Only Afsaneh seemed

[15] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.

willing to endure physical violence. Nonetheless, according to her, her husband is relatively permissive with her compared to many Tajikistani husbands, and in fact, he plans to have her join him in Russia for fertility treatment once the pandemic lessens enough to permit travel. All four women live in or near the capital.

Berina noted that the education level of women in the city makes their situation better, but divorce for women in rural areas carries social and economic risks (for reasons discussed below in this section). Dilruba similarly expressed a belief that many daughters-in-law accept abusive situations because their education level is low. Yet, she affirmed that violence towards women is part of Tajikistani culture and is still widespread in villages, regardless of education level (interviews with author August-October 2020).

Dilbar Turkhanova attributes revival of these patriarchal traditions with reversals of Soviet-era gains for women, particularly in rural areas where most of Tajikistan's population lives. For example, many Tajikistanis now marry only via religious ceremony without legally registering. This has made divorce a real threat for women, who prefer to endure violence from their husband and/or mother-in-law rather than to try to survive on their own with no legal right to financial support or property (Turkhanova 2013:138-141). Both gender experts I interviewed agreed that this continues to be the case. Aleah added that in villages, even women who are legally married can face this daunting prospect, since families may not register daughters-in-law as a resident at their house. Additionally, she and Berina explained that although the husband's family must provide his wife and children with housing if they do divorce, often this means that the divorced wife and children simply live in a different wing of the in-laws' house. There they can face harassment, abuse, or in rare cases, according to Aleah, death. Social workers Laleh

and Farhad also discussed this same legal obstacle to divorce for rural wives, Laleh, highlighting these women's low education and financial dependence on their husband's family as aggravating factors, and Farhad stressing that the courts can do little because women have few legal rights (interviews with author June-October 2020).

From a legal standpoint, for at least a decade and a half after independence, the Tajikistani government showed much less interest in regulating family matters such as marriage than had the Soviets (Roche and Hohmann 2013:134). This may owe at least in part to the scrapping of the existing Soviet legal system, although Tajikistan relied on Soviet law initially. Yet, upon independence, not only was the government forced to participate in a bloody conflict for its survival, but the country began building a completely new legal system from the ground up, turning to foreign advisers from Western countries, international organizations, and elsewhere (Stalbovskiy, Stalbovskaya, and Abdulhamidov 2015). At the same time, with the revival of patriarchal tradition, the post-Soviet Tajik government has made no attempt to collect data on the extent of violence against women, including domestic violence (Turkhanova 2013:138-141). President Rahmon at times appears to carry a double standard, expressing support for traditional gender roles to his constituency while passing gender equality laws to uphold a progressive image to the international community (Harris 2013:122).

Afsaneh's attitude hints at a separate but related reason behind the lack of official records on domestic violence. She described her husband as nice and loving. He communicates with her from Russia via video chat every two or three days, and before he left Tajikistan, he occasionally gave her money to buy something for herself because he wanted her to look beautiful as his wife. But, she added, like a "normal" husband, he

would beat her "nicely and softly . . . with fist [sic]" every two to three months. He only shouts at her when she does "something wrong," e.g., not washing a shirt he wanted to wear (even though she did not know he wanted to wear it then). Dilruba, the social worker, explained that when her own husband used to beat her, she never considered going to the police because it was "normal." She added that girls' parents teach them that violence towards a wife/daughter-in-law is normal, and that a girl who loves her husband should not risk losing him by reporting violence to law enforcement. Social worker Laleh echoed this observation, saying that many women will not report a husband's physical abuse because they believe it is normal, and even learn that from their parents. In her paper, Dilbar Turkhanova expanded on this, noting:

> "[L]aw enforcement bodies are reluctant to respond to women's requests to intervene in domestic violence case [sic], since women frequently decide to stop the investigation due to reconciliation with the abuser, and the general encouragement that women resolve the issues privately with the abuser" (2013:143).

When I asked Berina about this seeming widespread acceptance of abuse, she acknowledged that addressing physical abuse can be difficult because "[t]here are some people who stick to the old M.O. [modus operandi]" (interviews with author August-October 2020). Thus, societal norms have precluded prosecution of or even delegitimizing some forms of violence against women.

Afsaneh also said she would never report a family member to the police for hurting her "because he's the family member." She disclaimed knowing whether women in her community face much physical violence, explaining that they do not discuss such

family matters. When asked if she thought many women face psychological violence, such as attempts to coerce by threats of physical harm, threats to withhold money or food, or guilting, she said that does not occur in her family. However, the interpreter, Yasmina, said that Afsaneh seemed uncomfortable with the question and appeared to be hiding something (interview with author October 2020).

Still, there are indications of at least challenges to the status quo and even possible changes, although the extent, effectiveness, and durability of recent changes remains to be seen. As further discussed in Chapter 4, the Tajikistani parliament gave a hopeful sign in 2012 by approving a law to punish perpetrators of domestic violence with up to fifteen days' incarceration and fines (RFE/RL's Tajik Service). However, gender experts denounced the bill for its "lack of provision for implementation resources or procedures," (Direnberger 2019: 52). Additionally, a Human Rights Watch report notes that the law:

> [provides] only for administrative liability. [It] does not criminalize domestic violence. Victims seeking prosecution and punishment of the abuser must bring claims under articles of the Tajik Criminal Code that govern assault and similar acts . . . . The law . . . [may leave] women who are divorced or in polygamous, child, or unregistered marriages unprotected (Swerdlow 2019).

This law was mentioned by several interviewees. Emigrant widow Aryana said that men are more careful about beating their wives because of the law. Yet, she gave the caveat that she is not sure, because one does not see women reporting domestic violence, since they may fear to deprive their children of a father. The recent law against husbands beating wives has had some effect, according to Laleh, but women think it is normal and

fear a ruined reputation if they are left without a husband. Gender expert Berina conceded that [the persistence of] traditional stereotypes, including "pressure on men to keep the traditions going" have made implementation of the 2012 law problematic. Nonetheless, she also noted that recently, centers staffed with women to provide legal assistance to victims of domestic violence and help women know their rights have started being established (interviews with author August-October 2020). However, as detailed further in Chapter 4, these and other resources are still not widely available.

VI. Conclusion

Statistically, Tajikistan appears to have low rates of crime and violence while suffering from an inadequate job market and stumbling economy. Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that both crime and violence have much higher incidence than reported, and that extensive corruption not only permits these. The corruption almost certainly serves to maintain the cultural divide between the governing, rich elite and the financially struggling populace; it may also exacerbate the economic divide. In Chapter 3, I will show how, despite a difference in history and culture, similar dynamics shape similar outcomes across the world from Central Asia, in Central America.

CHAPTER 3

Crime, Violence, and Migration - Economic Symptoms of Corruption - Guatemala

> *In Guatemala, our main problems are poverty [sic]. But it's not that Guatemala is poor – there's a lot of corruption . . . . The social programs that are created are to support the poorest, most vulnerable families. However, since corruption exists within the program itself. . . [it] doesn't really reach the poorest or most vulnerable people . . .* – Social Worker, *Interview with author, August 2020*

Although not as low as in Tajikistan, most types of crime in Guatemala, except for homicide, appear statistically lower than in many other countries, including the United States. Still, Guatemala has held the dubious distinction of being one of the most violent places in the world (Alarcon 2016:15). The violence has a disproportionate effect on women: in 2012, only El Salvador surpassed Guatemala in femicide rates worldwide (Alarcon 2016:30). As discussed in section 5 below, violence towards Guatemalan women is widespread and often hidden. Violence in Guatemala also has economic effects: a 2006 study by the United Nations Development Program (PNUD) in Guatemala found that violence in Guatemala has lost the country almost 7.3% of its gross domestic product—nearly USD $2.4 billion even though the armed conflict that killed thousands had ended a decade earlier (Matute and García 2007:13). At the same time, the CIA World Factbook describes "remittances from Guatemala's large expatriate community in the U.S. [as] equivalent to two-thirds of the country's exports and about a tenth of its GDP" ("Guatemala"). This chapter will discuss intersections of dynamics similar to those in Tajikistan that appear to be part of a cycle. This cycle includes:

1. government corruption stemming from: a) a historical blurring of lines between legal and extralegal violence as a means of political control, and b) a view of political power as a means to personal enrichment;

2. a paucity of jobs and a high level of poverty;

3. citizens' mistrust in government; and

4. a corresponding willingness by citizens to take matters into their own hands by engaging in crime, violence, and/or labor migration, either so that they can survive where an ineffective government does little to protect or assist its citizens, or because they can do so with impunity.

In this chapter, I will look at Guatemala's history of repression and corruption; crime and violence, including vigilantism; how poverty and violence feed corruption, crime, and migration; the role Guatemala's ineffective legal system plays among these other dynamics; and finally, violence against women.

I. Historic Governmental Repression and Corruption

Guatemala's violence may owe in part to in the government's historical use of forceful repression during the civil war in the latter part of the twentieth century (Reséndiz 2016:114). This is when what the PNUD describes as an "economy of violence," began to evolve – networks of "individuals and organizations that make use of violence to pursue their economic ends, almost always illegal, that impact a . . . political system" (Matute and García 2007:12-13). Its roots began, however, in the 1930s, when President Jorge Ubico created a secret urban police force to intimidate and repress political opposition. He also strengthened the role of the military in rural areas (Handy 2017:290). In the following decades, the military was instrumental in intimidating or violently opposing would-be reformers. This culminated in the toppling of the Arbenz

government in 1951, the United States government aiding and abetting (Handy 2017:291-294).

In this context, the role of the military in Guatemala's government continued to increase, its violence justified as "saving Guatemalan democracy from communism" (Handy 2017:295). Landowners actively supported this, calling for military repression of even peaceful, legal opposition or action against them by peasants, perceiving them as threatening (Handy 2017:300). Military violence escalated into genocide in the early 1980s, with the military creating civil patrols among the rural citizenry, whose members did not always participate willingly. Nonetheless, violence among the populace thus became "internalized," acceptable, and even desirable (Handy 2017:302). Furthermore, "death squads" would target political opponents of the Guatemalan government, which included university professors, students, and anyone calling for reform. These supposedly criminal organizations were in fact controlled by Guatemalan security forces (Handy 2017:298-300). Discomfited by limitations placed on them in the late 80s and 90s as democracy began to make slow strides in Guatemala, some military and security personnel turned back to these "hidden terror networks," carrying out assassinations of prominent human rights advocates and others well into the first decade of the 21st century (Handy 2017:304-305).

II. Crime and Violence

Following the end of the conflict, these "hidden terror networks" became involved in illicit activities at the local and transnational level (Matute and García 2007:12-13). Meanwhile, high levels of violence continue to afflict the country. Ten years after the Peace Accords ending the Guatemalan Civil War were signed, the homicide rate had

jumped more than 120% from 1999, with over 5800 violent deaths in 2006 alone (Matute and García 2007:11). Statistics from INACIF (National Institute of Forensic Sciences) gathered by Guatemala's Dirección de Monitoreo y Comunicación (Office of Monitoring and Control) show a similar number ten years later – 5459 homicides in 2016 (although this appears to be part of a gradual decline after homicides spiked at almost 6700 in 2010). Likewise, in recent decades, Guatemala has seen the proliferation of violent street gangs or "maras" such as the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Barrio 18 (Reséndiz 2016:115-118). International drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) have also proliferated during the same time (Dudley 2016:8-9). Nonetheless, as Table 3 shows, rates for many types of crime are statistically low or mid-range compared to other countries in the world.

What is behind the sudden surge in certain types of crime while statistics for seemingly related violent and property crimes remain much lower? Multiple studies indicate that the "mara" infiltration began during a four-year period from 1998-2002, when the United States deported almost 40,000 Guatemalans. Many had learned American-style gang culture and/or had criminal records (Reséndiz 2016:112). Additionally, the government's ties to some criminal organizations via the "hidden networks" preclude it from effectively dealing with them (Matute and García 2007:12-13). Questions remain, however, as to what extent relationships between drug trafficking organizations and *maras* exist and if so, how they may foster crime. A 2016 study prepared for USAID by Steven Dudley of InSight Crime could not yield conclusive results about possible connections between DTOs and *maras*. Disparities between data from different agencies and the fact that pertinent evidence from crime scenes was either

mishandled or not collected at all played a part. (Dudley 2016:5, 12, 50). It is conceivable, then, that similar problems with data collection or handling may contribute to low statistics for other types of crime as well.

Table 3 – Guatemala Crime Statistics 2011[16][17]
(*United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2021:DATAUNODC*)

Crime	**Rate *(per 100,000 population)***	**Rank (*high-low*)**	**Number of Countries Reporting**	**Percentage Comparison**
Burglary	12.16	76	92	.82 Rate lower than in over 80% of reporting countries
Theft	54.33	92	103	.89 Rate lower than in almost 90% of reporting countries
Car theft	80.	34	100	.34 Rate higher than in over half of reporting countries but not in top 25%
Robbery	22.81	75	106	.71 Rate lower than over 70% of reporting countries
Kidnapping	0.83	41	98	***.41*** ***In top half of reporting countries, but not in top third***
Serious Assault	41.72	55	101	***.54*** ***Not in top half of reporting countries but close; mid-range***
Sexual Violence	3.81	84	100	.84 Rate lower than in over 80% of reporting countries
Homicide	*38*	*6*	*163*	***.04*** ***Rate higher than in over 95% or reporting countries***

Manuela[18], one of the social workers I talked to, had a very complete perspective on the crime rate in Guatemala. She mentioned how crime had surged both with the arrival of deported gangsters in the 1990s and when former guerrilla fighters and military

[16] Data is from 2011 since it is the last year for which both Tajikistan and Guatemala reported statistics to the UN in all categories of crime mentioned in this thesis.
[17] See Index A for a comparison of 2011 statistics in Guatemala, Tajikistan, and the United States.
[18] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.

personnel became mercenaries after the 1997 Peace Accords. For the last ten years, she said, mass migrations have sustained yet another wave, and, she added, another uptick is expected due to the pandemic (Personal communications with author, December 2020). While most Guatemalan interviewees expressed a belief that crime is not prevalent in their communities, they unhesitatingly affirmed that there is a lot of crime in the country. Five emigrant widows, two of whom had worked in the capital for a few years before returning to the more rural region that they grew up in. mentioned what they saw as the discrepancy of high crime rates in large urban centers and lower rates in their own communities. However, Eva, who had also worked in Guatemala City earlier in her life, said she had heard of crime even in her region, and although Juana said she is not aware of much crime generally in her area, she affirmed that she had heard of drugs in the center of the closest town (Interviews with author July 2020). Additionally, when I was doing beta interviews in that town and the surrounding area the previous year, a social worker from a different organization, Isabel,[19] indicated that local drug trafficking is quietly obvious in the luxurious homes and conspicuous consumerism of some of the town's inhabitants. S/he mentioned truckloads of drugs and other goods that pass through the town to be illegally smuggled across the Mexico-Guatemala, noting that people who begin working with trucking companies that transport goods from Guatemala City become rich overnight (conversation with author, August 2019). Jocelyn put things into perspective, explaining that while the municipality where most of my key informants live does not have as much crime, narcotrafficking has a heavy presence in the department

[19] Pseudonym for privacy and security. Organization deliberately left anonymous for safety reasons and because information was given in an informal beta study prior to IRB approval.

due to its proximity to the border, even including some nearby villages where poppy[20] is grown (Interview with author August 2020).

Still, while most Guatemalan interviewees disclaimed more than a general knowledge of crime in their country or region, I believe there is a fear of the power of drug traffickers and organized crime in the country. Two Guatemalans who helped facilitate my interviews or put me in contact with others who could repeatedly cautioned me about asking more than general questions on the topics. One refused to discuss the matter in public at all, and two of the organizations who offered to help with the interviews insisted on vetting my interview questions ahead of time due in large part to fears of putting anyone at risk for talking about drug trafficking. The participation of law enforcement in drug smuggling and other crimes, as discussed elsewhere in the chapter, likely feeds those fears.

I got a thorough explanation of another possible reason for the discrepancy between low to mid-range non-violent crime statistics and Guatemala's high homicide rates from Manuela. A Mayan woman who works for an NGO program that trains rural communities to collaborate on social welfare projects, Manuela had herself grown up in a community that participated in the program. She explained that communal justice in the form of Mayan Law, which has long existed, was enshrined in law as part of UN involvement after the Peace Accords.[21] In response to the above-mentioned crime waves, [rural] communities took action. They began forcing young men with long or dyed hair,

[20] Poppy is a flowering plant used in the production of opium and heroin that is often cultivated for that purpose in Afghanistan and increasingly, in Latin America.
[21] Manuela mentioned that communal law is still administered via COCODES (personal communication with author, December 2020). COCODES, as discussed in Chapter 4, are community development councils established by law in 2002 to empower poor indigenous communities (Seider 2017:75-76)

tattoos, or clothing that "isn't normal," to conform to societal norms, imposing fines or jail time in some cases. Girls are not allowed to dye their hair. Parents are responsible to burn or get rid of their children's "inappropriate" clothing, and young people who refuse to conform will face Mayan Law. Manuela explained that Mayan Law involves making the offender walk on his knees down a stony path or over corn, depending on the community. Then the parents and/or mayor administer ten to fifteen lashes with a whip, to absolve the offender's family of responsibility for his misbehavior. Such public humiliation can cost the family in property rights and access to schools or cemeteries, and the family often ends up moving. Additionally, Manuela stated that communities imposed 9:00 PM curfews, and groups of citizens take turns patrolling the streets at night. Crime, she added, decreased after those measures, and while there are always people who engage in it secretly, it is no longer taking control of the territory as at first (interview and personal communications with author, August and December 2020). Strong social pressure in the rural communities, therefore, may provide a strong incentive to conform to societal norms. As discussed below in the section on Guatemala's legal system, people even suspected of crimes by the crime watch committees and citizens of rural communities can face sudden, violent, and deadly extra-judicial punishment. Thus, even where non-violent crime rates appear low, violence can continue to be a way of life.

III. Escape from Poverty and Violence: Corruption, Crime, and Migration

Whatever reasons underlie the pervasive violence, Guatemalan society seems entrenched in a cycle wherein the private sector spends money on security that it could otherwise use on enterprises that might more widely benefit the Guatemalan economy. Similarly, the government has dedicated more resources to fighting crime than on

improving social programs, such as education, that would create a more positive social atmosphere (Matute and García 2007:13-14). For example, Alarcon argues that while Guatemala's criminal code has lengthened 45% in a 40-year span, new laws have focused overly much on transnational crime, turning the Guatemalan judiciary into an oppressive system that accommodates free market policies and globalization at the expense of the lower classes (2016:13, 83).

Meanwhile, high levels of poverty and inequality persist in Guatemala. As of 2006, over half of Guatemalans lived in poverty, at the time one of the highest rates of unequal income distribution in Latin America. (Matute and García 2007:12). Repressive policies have historically imposed poverty and social marginalization on the lower classes, particularly the indigenous population; continuing political corruption manifests itself in unequal land distribution and exclusionary politics, ills that have plagued Guatemala since colonial times. (Handy 2017:282-284). Despite the incorporation into the 1996 Peace Accords of land reform policies that aimed to reverse decades of the practice of large landowners taking over peasant lands, these have been implemented only to a limited extent or not at all. The same handful of elite families who have dominated the economy since the 1800s continue to control most sectors (Handy 2017:310). Corruption aside, the Guatemalan government's unwillingness to increase tax revenues may likewise contribute not only to deficiencies in healthcare access, but to other social programs that could fight poverty and unemployment (Handy 2017:311-312). For example, Guatemala ranked fifth in sugar exports worldwide in 2005 (Handy 2017:310). Yet, it has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world (Prado 2018:240).

Indeed, the PNUD, in its 2007 report, faults the national education system for failing to fully prepare young people for the job market. At the same time, there are not enough jobs to go around. Thus, the twin inadequacies of poor education and few opportunities may force young newcomers to the job market into the shadow economy (Matute and García 2007:12). Jim Handy states that for young people [in urban areas] "the choice is not between the maras [violent street gangs] and a poorly paid job that allowed them to exist barely, but [between] . . . the maras and—there was no obvious alternate" (2017:313). Consequently, for Guatemala's poor, crime and violence may offer a faster, easier road to a living wage than a job market in which they cannot find permanent work and/or are exploited (Reséndiz 2016:117-118).

A Guatemalan social worker, Jocelyn[22], explained how corruption impedes poverty relief efforts. Jocelyn is Mayan, a professional woman who works as a gender adviser with an NGO that provides aid to impoverished mothers and infants in two of Guatemala's departments (geographical administrative divisions). In her words, Guatemala's problems stem from poverty, but "it's not that Guatemala is poor. There is a lot of corruption . . . . If there existed a good distribution of the resources that we actually have, Guatemala would stop having as many problems as it does." She went on to give an example: health care is free in Guatemala. However, some communities have no access to any sort of health care facility, personnel, or even medication, or if medication is available, it is overpriced and of poor quality (Jocelyn, interview with author, August 2020).

[22] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.

The family situation of Amalia,[23] an emigrant widow in a rural region of Guatemala, highlighted this lack of healthcare access. Amalia told me that her husband had emigrated to the United States two years prior when their daughter became sick to the point of needing weekly dialysis. However, at the time of the interview, her daughter could no longer make the three-hour trip to the healthcare facility to get dialysis (interview with author, July 2020). Jocelyn, who had facilitated the interview, told me about three weeks later that the daughter had passed (interview with author, August 2020). Amalia explained that she and her husband, who worked in agriculture, dreamed of having a house a little nicer than their current one, but that is no longer possible. She wept as she told us that, once their daughter got sick, she and her husband decided that he should emigrate because "we have no money here for medical expenses" (interview with author, July 2020).

Amalia's story also highlighted what, according to Jocelyn, are two factors driving Guatemalan emigration: poverty and unemployment. Many men are farmers with little education, earning around 300 quetzales a week, around $38.00 USD[24] (interview with author August 2020). The need for one's own house and land can also push male labor emigration in Guatemala. Anastasia affirmed that some rural families do not have a house; some may not have land or may rent land (interview with author August 2020). Couples tend to have many children—"as many as God gives us"—since birth control is still widely frowned upon. Although public education is free, some related expenses such as school supplies, uniforms, food, and extra-curricular activities are not. Additionally,

[23] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.
[24] Per Citibank Exchange rates on 7 December 2020.

some communities do not have schools, so parents must also pay transportation costs for their children to attend the nearest school. Once children finish primary school and start basic, these expenses increase (Jocelyn, interview with author, July 2020).[25] At that point, many fathers decide to emigrate. However, high rates of unemployment in Guatemala also affect professionals. Jocelyn told me she considered herself lucky to have found a job, as some of her classmates who graduated with education-related debts could not find a job in Guatemala and were forced to emigrate (interview with author, August 2020).

Similarly, poverty and unemployment seem to contribute to both the drug trade and large-scale emigration in Guatemala. Jocelyn explained that that the departments bordering Mexico have a strong illegal drug trade. There are villages that engage in poppy farming both in the region where she currently works and in a region where she formerly worked, closer to the Mexican border. The poppy fields, she added, are no secret, but government attempts to eradicate the practice have met with little success because it is people's livelihood. For villagers, she said, "it is like planting beans." I mentioned that it would be interesting to know whether the poppy plantations were more of a financial decision by poor people or a matter of locational convenience for DTOs. She assured me that the growers are poor people who earn little from their product—for them it is a form of subsistence (Jocelyn, interview with author, August 2020).

In 2012-2013, Jocelyn worked for a different NGO even closer to the Mexican border than where she now works. There, she said, it is well known that there are many poppy plantations in area villages, and the trade appeared to be well-established when she

[25] Jocelyn told me on a separate occasion that primary school comprises the first six grades, of public education after kindergarten; "basic" school comprises scholastic years 7-9, parallel to middle school or junior high in the United States. Personal communication with the author, August 2020.

was there. She observed a purchaser in a town plaza shouting his offer to buy ounces of poppy. People were going to him to sell but turning away because his offer was too low – 80 quetzales[26] an ounce, which she estimated would be around $11-$12 USD. I asked what the buyer did with the purchased ounces. She recalled hearing that the buyers sold the poppy milk to people who took it to Mexico, where she imagined it would get processed (interview with author, August 2020).

This proximity to Mexico feeds the drug trade as well as emigration in border regions, Jocelyn noted. I mentioned that I recalled the previous year, in 2019, as I was coming into town to meet her, the chauffeur, a native of the town, pointed out houses that belonged to "coyotes."[27] Among the small, one- or two- bedroom houses in the town and surrounding villages, these multi-storied, relatively luxurious houses stood out. Jocelyn concurred, saying that the coyotes do not try to hide their identity, so that people know who to go to. She added that locals openly rate the qualities of different local coyotes. Aside from the coyotes, however, people in the municipal seat[28] with nicer houses have gotten ahead in one of two ways. Some people work in a business and might not earn a lot, but they manage. However, many of the [nice] houses belong to people who had gone to the United States [to work] (Jocelyn, interview with author, August 2020).

Yet, one key informant and one subject matter expert with whom I spoke seemed to believe that the Guatemalan economy and labor market can be sufficient to sustain a

[26] One quetzal = approximately $0.13 per Business Insider's currency converter (https://markets.businessinsider.com/currency-converter/guatemalan-quetzal_united-states-dollar, accessed 3/12/21).
[27] "Coyote" is a term commonly used in Latin America and the United States for people who smuggle undocumented migrants across international borders.
[28] Guatemalan municipalities have a central town or city – the municipal seat – surrounded by small, farming communities or villages. The ones I visited during my beta study were accessible only by foot paths off the main road outside of town.

modest lifestyle. Juana[29], an emigrant widow I spoke to in July 2020, stated that people emigrate because they "get into vices and want a big house, nice things" (interview with the author, July 2020). Manuela, who works for an NGO in a different region, less explicitly alluded to a desire for a better lifestyle rather than financial need as a migration push factor. She discussed that some women do not want their husbands to leave. Manuela described these situations as "sad" cases of abandonment. She explained:

> But because they want to have a better life, a better house, to have a little more land . . . . Sometimes the husband makes the decision and then lets his wife know, right? 'I want to go somewhere else . . . and I'll send you [money for] the expenses . . . I'm not happy here.' I sometimes see how the neighbors copy each other: 'Look that neighbor over there, he has a better house . . . so I want to give you all this kind of life.' Sometimes that's how the initiative starts among them.

Still, when I mentioned having spoken to an emigrant widow (Amalia) in a different department whose husband had to emigrate to pay for their daughter's extensive medical expenses, Manuela acknowledged that in the department where she works, there are similar cases in which a family need drives migration. And despite Juana's observation that greed causes people to emigrate, at another point in our interview, she stated that financial need had caused her husband to emigrate. Juana has three children (one deceased). They were in their adolescent and teen years when her husband left four years earlier because "there was no work here to support the children so they could study, that would give them a better life." Her husband stopped sending money to her two years

[29] Pseudonym for security and confidentiality.

after he emigrated, and he no longer keeps in touch with the family, she said, because he "fell into vice, into liquor." She went on to describe other financial difficulties she has faced as a result of her husband's emigration and subsequent failure to send money (Juana, interview with the author, July 2020). Thus, her personal difficulties may influence her negative view of people's rationale to emigrate.

Of the five emigrant widows I interviewed besides Amalia and Juana, four attributed their husband/domestic partner's emigration to financial hardship. Eva[30] cried as she talked about her family. Her husband, who sends money and stays in regular contact, left three years ago. He was a farm worker who did not have enough land and could not earn enough money to support the children's needs as they grew. The lack may owe to decreasing resources—she mentioned that they had given two of her children some of their land (interview with author, July 2020). Marlene[31], mother of two pre-school children, was living with her mother when I spoke to her. Her husband, a farm worker, left five months ago. He was having trouble finding work, and the family had no place to live (interview with author, July 2020). Liliana,[32] who still has three of her five children living with her, stated that her husband had left six months ago to go to the United States for a few years [so they could] have a better life because Guatemala has so much poverty (interview with author, July 2020). Ester[33] has five children, between the ages of seven and fourteen. She told me that her husband emigrated to the United States out of necessity, when she was pregnant with her youngest. He made up his mind on his

[30] Pseudonym for privacy and security.
[31] Pseudonym for privacy and security.
[32] Pseudonym for privacy and security.
[33] Pseudonym for privacy and security.

own and told her, "[W]e don't have anything. I'm going to work over there, I'm going to build a house, I'm going to buy land" (interview with the author, July 2020).

Jocelyn highlighted an additional reason for emigration. She indicated that while routine emigration from the region where she now works is a result of poverty and unemployment, in her previous work with migrants along the Mexican border, she noted that violence drives emigration from other parts of Guatemala. Additionally, many women, even from the area she now works, emigrate to escape domestic violence (Jocelyn, interview with author, August 2020).

IV. Ineffective Legal System

Guatemala's formal legal system in recent years at best has had little effect, and at worst, caused violence to spread. The government has responded to increased violence by expanding its criminal code, reacting strongly to crime and violence, and possibly, at times, resorting to its own brand of vigilantism. Adolfo Jacobo Alarcón Duque notes that Guatemala's repressive "mano dura" [firm hand] policies toward crime reflect a reactionary culture, common in Latin America, that does not seek to address the root causes (2016:55). The justice system is inept: it lacks enough judges, prison guards, and other personnel, and existing personnel do not receive sufficient training or regular evaluations. Likewise, there is little inter-agency cooperation, with agency leaders overly concerned with political repercussions and beset by lack of resources. Despite reforms, much of the Guatemalan populace does not have full access to the justice system for reasons ranging from financial to racial (Alarcón 2016:73, 75-77).

While most of the women I interviewed had little to say about crime and law enforcement specifically, a couple were openly cynical about government concern for

public welfare. I asked if Liliana thought that there were any changes the government could make to create a situation in which her husband could stay with the family and still earn enough. Liliana scoffed, saying that politicians make all kinds of campaign promises to help the poor but forget when they get in power (interview with author, August 2020). When we discussed corruption and government inefficiencies, Jocelyn corroborated the endemic nature of these problems in social welfare provision. She asserted that the government is aware of Guatemala's international reputation for corruption, but officials do not care. I asked what she saw as the roots of this endemic corruption. She replied that while politics should be about community service and working for social progress, Guatemalans have a misconception about political power and government positions:

> [I]n Guatemala, I believe that we consider politics as a way to get rich . . . without worrying about the consequences to our neighbor. So then, I am prioritizing my personal wellbeing and not the common good . . . If I am going to have a government position, I am going to take advantage of it to amass a fortune. I would believe that is how I am going to get out of poverty, which is what everyone wants, right (Jocelyn, interview with author, August 2020)?

Social worker Isabel, who in my beta study talked more openly about drug trafficking (see Section 2) lent credence to this idea. S/he asserted that some law enforcement in his/her town works with the drug cartels. S/he explained this by observing that some policemen have simple houses and a "normal" life, while others' houses appear normal on the outside but are "like a mansion" on the inside. Some of the latter, s/he added, have barely started their careers, and s/he questioned how else they could have attained that lifestyle (if not for drug trafficking) (conversation with author, August

2019). Nevertheless, Jocelyn believes that the Guatemalan population has become complicit in the endemic corruption because they say nothing, when, for example, they know a project is overpriced (Jocelyn, interview with author, August 2020). If she is right that the average Guatemalan sees politics as an escape chute from poverty and not a mechanism to effect social change, this jaundiced view of the political system might convince those who would otherwise speak out against corruption or work towards social progress that there is little point in doing so. Likewise, if law enforcement's involvement in criminal activity is as visible as claimed by Isabel, it would tend to foster further mistrust of law enforcement as corrupt and even make people fearful of speaking against malfeasance, a situation I encountered, as detailed in Section 2.

At the same time, a jaundiced view of government—the justice system in particular—makes individuals and communities more likely to administer justice with their own hands, according to the PNUD. From 2011-2013, 94 people were lynched, mostly in areas of high indigenous populations (populations who may have learned this technique from the military during the armed conflict) (Alarcon:74). Guillermo O'Donnell explains these situations where:

> [w]hatever formally sanctioned law exists is applied intermittently, if at all . . . is encompassed by the informal law enacted by the privatized . . . powers that actually rule those places. This leads to complex situations . . . . The resulting informal legal system, punctuated by temporary reintroductions of the formal one, supports a world of extreme violence, as abundant data from both rural and urban regions show (2004:41).

The aberration of the communal justice that Manuela described to me fit the description of extreme violence. In a recent conversation, Manuela said that lynching is nothing new, and it is motivated by racism and hatred. Drivers passing through an area who accidentally hit someone in their car may face deadly town vengeance. People are lynched for theft, spreading gossip that is not true, revenge, or, in a nearby town famous for its Christianity[34], stealing vegetables. Anyone unknown in the communities is at risk, whether emigrants from Honduras passing through, curious tourists without local contacts, or even, Manuela said, her employers - native Guatemalans who run the NGO. She added that the latter will not go into a community until Mayan people trained by them have established a rapport. She described the lynching process: a woman or other people will start following someone they do not know, shouting. The person may be accused of stealing food, people, or children. Eventually the crime watch committees will get involved. Once the neighbors trap someone, they try to ascertain the person's identity. If no one recognizes the person, eventually he will be set on fire with gasoline and burned to death. Speaking of the famous evangelical town, Manuela said:

> They freely lynch someone in a crowd of 2000-3000 people. They may be Christians, but they get out their gallon of gasoline, or they break your car window if you go by at the wrong time or they take you off the road with a truck full of vegetables, and no one saw anything [sic] (communications with author, December 2020).

[34] This town's economic prosperity which it attributes to its widespread adoption of "Prosperity Gospel" evangelicalism are the subject of a 2016 article by Amy Bracken in news outlet *The World*. According to Bracken, residents claim that since they converted from Catholicism and swore off alcohol, crime and alcoholism have dropped and that their town has become prosperous.

No one protests, she added, and police who try to get involved may have their vehicles burned. She also asserted that while lynchings happen throughout the country, they are given more news coverage when they occur in Mayan villages (communication with author, December 2020).

V. Violence Against Women

As noted above, violence in Guatemala disproportionately affects women. Central America's history of violence towards women goes back to the 1sixteenth century Spanish conquest of the region. Since then, structural mechanisms that disadvantage women, particularly indigenous women, have become entrenched. Women are at the mercy of a patriarchal system, influenced by Spanish concepts of gendered honor. Accordingly, while men maintain honor through financial success, upholding commitments, protecting their reputation, and controlling their women and children, women maintain honor through sexual purity and/or the appearance thereof. Men and women can lose honor; however, only men can gain it back. Perceived sexual misdeeds affect a woman's honor much more than a man's. Thus, "women have historically been discouraged from reporting sexual violence," especially since a woman's behavior affects not only her honor but that of her husband and family (England 2014:125, 128). (This may account, at least in part, for Guatemala's comparatively low rate of reported sexual violence on Table 3.) Guatemalan society tends to view men as aggressive by nature, so a woman who does not avoid or protect herself from violence has only herself to blame (England 2014:131). These cultural norms also confuse men as to appropriate boundaries regarding sexual consent. Since a woman must maintain her honor, a man could perceive

an unwelcome response to his advances as her playing "hard to get," a part of the game (England 2014:133).

Cultural norms also make women the sexual property of their men. While this technically applies only to marriage, in practice the idea extends to other types of relationships such as dating (England 2014:128-129). Because of this, laws have defined crimes in ways that stress physical coercion and harm, not recognizing psychological, economic, or emotional elements. In addition, from this perspective, a husband or father may be viewed as the injured party more than the woman. The burden of proof lies on any woman past the age of twelve who suffers sexual violence to show "'sufficient violence' or incapacitation" (England 2014:128-30). Thus, a male perpetrator can claim that he and his female victim had an existing intimate relationship. According to cultural norms, she owed him sex. The victim can deny the relationship, but judges more often believe the man (England 2014:130 & 132)

Besides the legal problems mentioned above, criminal and civil law have sexist language. For example, Guatemalan law historically labeled sexual crimes as

> "crimes against a women's modesty . . . imply[ing] that only respectable women deserved legal protection . . . . This notion of modesty has historically been used to control women's sexual behavior to legitimize discipline (even through violence) of women" by various actors (England 2014:126).

Similarly, the law defined statutory rape as being against an "honest woman." thus placing the perpetrator's culpability in part on the perceived character and behavior of his victim (England 2014:130).

Legal resolution and punishment for sex crimes presented problems as well. Unless a woman suffered several physical injuries or was very young, sexual violence has been viewed as a private matter, or even as normal, since it rarely occurs between strangers. Due to sexual crimes' legal classification as "private," alternative resolutions included mediation. This meant that a woman would have to negotiate with her victimizer, and the state did not always have the obligation to prosecute these "minor" crimes. Thus, the victim (or her family) had to press charges and pursue the case, often risking her safety at the hands of the perpetrator, his friends, or his family. The law also provided for charges against an offender to be dropped if he married the victim. Additionally, poor women cannot pay for a lawyer, travel to and from urban centers where judicial proceedings occur or take time off work (England 2014:131).

Table 3 in Section 2 does not indicate how prevalent domestic violence may be, but Guatemala's 2011 rates for similar/related crimes—serious assault and sexual violence—fall below rates of over half of reporting countries that same year, with sexual violence rates lower than those of 80% of reporting countries. Nonetheless, my fieldwork revealed evidence of higher than reported incidence of domestic violence in Guatemala as well as support for the reasons stated above for the low reporting. In my interviews with Jocelyn and Manuela, each confirmed that the regions where she works have high rates of gender violence against women. Jocelyn added that her organization was then working on a COVID-19 project seeking to decrease (as in Tajikistan) higher-than-usual instances of domestic violence due to the confinement of people to their houses. She also referred me to a study done in 2017 in a municipality in one of the departments where she works. It

surveyed 122 women between the ages of 15 and 60 from different communities in the municipality. It revealed that:

- 75% of participants knew of a woman who suffered verbal/emotional abuse from her domestic partner
- 78% said violence towards women is frequent in their communities
- 36% reported receiving physical abuse at least once from their husbands, usually due to drinking, jealousy, or not turning over money they earned to their husbands
- 26% knew of a woman who died due to violence
- 59% said that some women often accept violence because they do not know their rights or where to report violence; they do not know how to survive without their husbands' provision of income or shelter; or they are afraid (Dirección Municipal de la Mujer del municipio de Comitancillo and the Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo (PNUD) 2017:21).

Emigrant widow interviewees in my fieldwork loosely followed the above pattern of a majority acknowledging that violence against women happens while far fewer admit to being a victim of it. Six of the seven said that it occurs in their region, with four expressly stating that they have heard about it. Juana said that it happens, sometimes because of the husband's alcoholism and the wife's ignorance of how or where to get help. Amalia, Eva, Marlene, and Ester said that they have heard of it, but they stipulated either that it is in nearby communities, not their own, or that they do not personally know

of a case. (Amalia, Marlene, and Ester's remarks were in the context of domestic violence against women, while Eva was discussing violence against women in general, which she tied to extorsion.) Similarly, Liliana observed that men would beat their wives more often a half century ago although it still happens now. Lending credence to the cultural view of women as men's sexual property, she pointed to jealousy as a contributing factor, and, like Juana, alcohol. Marlene also expressed belief that alcoholism feeds domestic violence. Additionally, Marlene stated, women defending their children from their husbands may elicit a violent response (interviews with author July and August 2020).

Evidence garnered from interviews also substantiated the idea that rural indigenous women silently endure physical and verbal abuse, with obstacles to speaking out comprising fear of reprisals, lack of knowledge, and delayed judicial responses. Jocelyn described a "culture of silence" in which domestic violence is not reported or even acknowledged. Juana remarked that besides the fact that women do not know what to do or where to get help if their husbands beat them, a man may threaten to kill his wife if she reports him. Since it can take the police days to respond, a woman will remain silent, she said. Manuela affirmed that some women will not even tell their families, explaining away bruises as accidents. Anastasia agreed, relating that one woman told her, "I fell," when Anastasia asked about her bruises (interviews with author July and August 2020). Threatened by their husbands not to speak up, women will not report domestic violence even though Anastasia and Manuela's organization has incorporated information regarding new anti-gender violence laws into its training for women, according to Manuela. Anastasia underscored that fear keeps women silent – fear of enduring worse

violence once a husband is released from jail after a wife files charges or fear that he will force her out of the house without her children. Anastasia recalled telling one woman, "Your husband has no right to beat you. Why don't you go to the police to report him?" The woman replied, "No, because he will leave, but he will come back . . . to keep beating me worse" [sic] (interviews with author July and August 2020).

Other deterrents mentioned in the literature to women reporting violence also surfaced in my fieldwork. One that both Manuela and Jocelyn noted, which I will explore more fully in Chapter 4, is that rural women may speak only their Mayan language. Manuela pointed out that because families prioritize boys' education, men may speak more Spanish than their wives, while Jocelyn added that even women who speak some Spanish may decide against bringing charges when their low level of education makes it difficult to understand officials' use of legal terminology. Governmental lapses and delays can exacerbate situations of interfamilial violence too, according to Jocelyn. As an example, she recounted that days earlier, she received a call about a pregnant teenager who had been beaten and turned out of her home. Jocelyn notified the appropriate agency, which she said is supposedly an emergency service. Nonetheless, agency representatives failed to arrive before nightfall, so Jocelyn took the girl home with her overnight. Agency representatives finally arrived the next morning—fifteen hours after Jocelyn's phone call. Jocelyn explained to them that she did not know what else to do since the girl had nowhere else to go (interviews with author July and August 2020).

Manuela attributed some domestic violence to the fact that many couples marry in their mid-teenage years. Living with a husband's parents limits his propensity towards physical abuse, she opined. (Nonetheless, as Chapter 4 will describe in more detail,

interviews indicated that women's in-laws may perpetrate other types of abuse, such as verbal, financial, psychological, and emotional.) Manuela conceded that domestic violence also occurs among adults, but she qualified that adults think more before acting. Emigrant widow Graciela's story did provide corroboration that marrying young can play a role in long-term domestic violence. Her mother had died when she was eight, and she "got with"[35] her ex-husband when she was 13, she said. She then endured twelve years of physical, verbal, and emotional domestic abuse. Her husband would yell at her and he beat her, at times till she bled. He would not allow her to keep going to school for fear she would meet other men, and when their three children came along, he would claim that he was not the father. The lack of her mother's love and advice made her cling to her husband and put up with the violence, while her lack of education kept her from realizing she could opt out of it, she claimed (interview with author August 2020).

VI. Conclusion

While statistically, Guatemala's rates for crimes other than homicide appear lower than those of many other countries, corruption, an accompanying and partially resultant governmental inefficiency, and a culture of silence and mistrust of government appear to both hide and foster violence and criminal activity, including interfamilial violence, especially against women. These same factors seem to exacerbate high levels of poverty, which feeds crime and labor migration. At the crux of these dynamics are women whose husbands migrate to earn money in another country. The next two chapters will examine the lives of "emigrant widows." Chapter 4 will compare women's rights and societal norms in Guatemala and Tajikistan. This will provide the framework for Chapter 5,

[35] A colloquial expression indicating the beginning of an intimate or a romantic relationship.

which focuses on the intersection of labor migration and women's rights in these migration “sending” countries.

CHAPTER 4

Gender in Guatemala and Tajikistan: What is a Woman?

Interviewer: *In your culture, what does it mean to be a woman?*
Interviewee: *A woman is nothing. You can beat her if you want.*

– Emigrant Widow, *Interview with author, October 2020*

Afsaneh, a Tajikistani emigrant widow, explained her culture's views on gender to me. A man, she said, is "king of the house;" a woman, however, has no opinion. A woman must implicitly obey her husband and parents-in-law in everything and take care of them. Afsaneh added that her religion (Sunni Islam) teaches these gender roles, and she agrees with them—because she has gotten used to living that way. Nonetheless, she made clear that she would not want her daughter to live that way (interview with author October 2020). Several Guatemalan emigrant widows expressed similar ideas about a husband's role, and two, one Roman Catholic, and one Protestant Evangelical, said that their religions support these gender roles. Responses by Tajikistani and Guatemalan subject matter experts and emigrant widows alike bolstered the idea that, especially in the rural regions of both countries, cultural mores dictate that men dominate the household and are the primary provider for the material needs of the family. As Jocelyn, a gender adviser said, "[I]n many less-developed countries, we [women] are given a little less importance [than men]."

This chapter delves more deeply into the lives of women in these two countries. It comprises two sections: the first, an examination of relevant literature supported by excerpts from interviews of key informants and subject matter experts, provides socioeconomic, historical, and cultural context for the second. The second section

documents the experiences of emigrant widows as married women in their cultures through excerpts of qualitative field interviews done via videoconference from June through October of 2020. They include: a sampling of emigrant widows in Guatemala and in Tajikistan, social workers who work with them (one of whom is an emigrant widow herself and another of whom is the daughter of one), and gender experts (one of whom is also a social worker) working to improve structural conditions affecting them in each country. The section focuses on dynamics that impact women and how emigrant widows have experienced the effect of those dynamics. It is divided into two subsections: 1) systemic repression: educational, cultural, and political, and 2) the economy from the perspective of family finances and women's opportunities in the labor market.

I. Women's Rights: History, Tradition, and Progressive Movements

A. Background

Tajikistan—The CIA World Factbook reports Tajikistan's population as over 70% rural, with over 31% of the population living below the poverty line. Ninety-eight percent of the population practice Islam ("Tajikistan"). Tajik tradition demands that women submit to men and be homemakers. Before Sovietization (i.e., prior to the Soviets attempting to force their values, ideals, and way of life on the Central Asian population as a means of control) women were rarely allowed in public. During Sovietization, the government employed contradictory strategies. They kept the society mostly agrarian to maximize cotton production while simultaneously pushing modern ways of thinking on the populace. Yet, attempts to equalize the sexes as a way of subjugating Tajik society had the reverse effect: the Tajikistani people resisted by hanging onto old traditions rather than advancing with the times (Harris 2000:207-208). The Soviets nonetheless left their

mark, engendering suspicion of women's movements by portraying them as trying to make women more masculine and leaving the impression that women's emancipation gives women a "double shift" of paid labor and domestic chores. Additionally, "[i]n Tajikistan, as in other Muslim countries, the Western women's movements have the added reputation of promoting sexual promiscuity" (Harris 2000:222-224). Then, after the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet Union, "the family institution [was] emphasized . . . as a distinguishing symbol of national identity," in Central Asia and has become an important basis for nation-building in the region. In Tajikistan, this policy resulted in a strengthening of the patriarchy and gender role stereotypes (Acar and Gunes-Ayata. 2000:341).

Guatemala—The CIA World Factbook reports Guatemala's population as over 40% indigenous and over 50% rural, with just under 60% of the population living below the poverty line. It lists religions as Roman Catholic, Protestant, and indigenous Maya ("Guatemala"). Eighty-three percent of the indigenous population live in poverty. Guatemalan girls experience heavy social pressure to get married and have children young. This particularly applies to Mayan girls, almost 40% of whom marry, formally or informally, before the age of 18. Nonindigenous girls do so at about half that rate. Exacerbating this problem, Guatemala's long history of marginalization of its indigenous inhabitants along with women's subordinate gender role in traditional Mayan culture means that Mayan girls are less likely than non-Mayan girls to be able to attend secondary school, learn about sexual and reproductive health, or get out of poverty (Wehr & Tum 2013:136). Therefore "sexual and reproductive health work in rural Guatemalan

communities . . . must also confront cycles of oppression that have marginalized Maya culture, language, and women for centuries" (Wehr & Tum 2013:137).

Some Guatemalan feminists believe European patriarchy fused with and reshaped existing "pre-Hispanic patriarchy" (Falquet 2019:93). In any case, European racism and patriarchy legitimized the use of mechanisms such as religion and education to subjugate women in indigenous populations, imposing ideas of, on the one hand, racial and gender inferiority, and on the other, feminine chastity, modesty, and responsibility for the family honor. These latter ideologies especially continue to contribute to physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence towards Guatemalan indigenous women today (Tecun León 2016:133-134).

B. Civil War and Aftermath: Effect on Women

Guatemala—Structural misogyny reached violent extremes during Guatemala's decades-long civil war in the latter half of the twentieth century. The military used rape and femicide as part of its strategy against the rebels (Destrooper 2014:10). Women suffered the same tortures as men, but many were violated in other ways: "mass public rapes," genital mutilation, sex slavery to soldiers, and violent forcible abortions. An official report showed that 80% of the war victims were Mayan (indigenous), 25% were women, and 93% of the violence and human rights violations were perpetrated by governmental forces (Falquet 2019:84; England 2014:124-125).

At the same time, women remained politically and socially disadvantaged. Unlike revolutionary movements elsewhere in Latin America, the rebel movement in Guatemala did not formally incorporate women as a group or pledge them any rights (Destrooper

2014:10). Additionally, the government's repression of any sociological/cultural debate, the dominant conservatism of the upper class and the Roman Catholic Church, and the left's rigid focus on social class alone probably prevented any women's rights organizations from developing. An early feminist in the 1960s described how men discouraged them from addressing women's issues because it "was distracting from the real conflict" (the civil war) (Carrillo and Chinchilla 2010:140-142).

Tajikistan—Tajikistan saw a period of transition during the 1990s. After the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, a civil war broke out followed by several years of socio-political tension, ending in the late 1990s (Harris 2000:210-211). Many Tajiks wanted to resume an openly Muslim identity, including traditional dress for women. Despite some opposition rooted in social and political motives, cultural expectations of women still hold sway (Harris 2000:210-211, 214). Even in the late 1990s, a woman determined her social status by demonstrating submission to familial authority, that of her husband or her parents (Harris 2000:208). Numbers of women in all levels of schooling dropped in the post-Soviet years, and the average age of marriage for women in the capital was 17. Many were pressured to marry even younger, either to alleviate the financial burdens of poorer families, or to ensure their virginity was intact at marriage, (though this situation may be changing due to conditions discussed below) (Harris 2000:216-218).

Women's economic and political opportunities also declined post-independence. Along with the rest of Central Asia, Tajikistan's transition to a market economy negatively impacted the job market (Moghadam 2000:24). Tajikistan was historically the poorest republic in the Soviet Union. This and the civil war, which resulted in a burgeoning refugee population, had negative effects, especially on women, children, and

retirees (Moghadam 2000:27-28). Women were increasingly laid off, and their employment rates in "trade, banking, insurance, financial services, and accounting" declined, as did social services they may have depended on such as childcare. Conversely, prostitution increased" (Moghadam 2000:24). Politically, as of 1996, percentages of women holding government office or jobs numbered in the single digits, according to the United Nations Development Programme's 1997 Development Report (as cited by Moghadam 2000:33).

C. Possibility of Progress

Tajikistan—In Tajikistan, various philanthropic organizations, national development agencies, and other international organizations have worked to improve Tajikistani women's rights as part of a broader strategy to fight terror and/or extremism. They rely on Tajikistani "gender experts" who work from a feminist viewpoint within international organizations (Direnberger 2019:39-40). Although these gender experts tend to reject the "feminist" label as anti-male and as forcing change rather than gradually working for it, they are committed to fighting gender inequality and domestic violence (Direnberger 2019:44, 50). Indeed, based on field research in 2003, Mary Elaine Hegland affirms that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have raised awareness about issues such as domestic violence and alternative ways of living. Many Tajikistanis find jobs with foreign-funded NGOs, which pay better than other jobs. These jobs expose them, particularly women, to different perspectives. Hegland also "uncovered complaints and feelings of dissatisfaction as well as attitudes, conversations, and small acts of resistance and individual revolts against unfair social and cultural gender rules" (2008:61-63).

As to measurable progress, Tajikistan has signed both the U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The NGO coalition From Equality de Jure to Equality de Facto has begun work on a report on how well Tajikistan has implemented its version of CEDAW. This coalition has also worked with the UN to address strengthening Tajikistan's domestic violence law as a first step towards gender equality. Meanwhile, NGOs have fostered women's participation in political, educational, and cultural activities. Apparently, this activity brought some results: both the 2005 and 2010 elections saw an increase in women elected ("The Role of NGOs in Tajikistan," Dar 2013). The government also ratified the 2010 National Strategic Plan to strengthen women (Direnberger 2019:53).

Guatemala—Due to "transitional justice," which focuses on "massive human rights abuses," the women's movement burgeoned during the peace process (Destrooper & Parmentier 2018:324). In the late 1980s and 1990s, women returning from exile in Western countries brought back a focus on women's issues, feminist ideology, and organizing experience (Carrillo, et al 2010:144). In the 1990s, international pressure and other factors fostered the incorporation of women into the peace process and reconstruction efforts (Destrooper 2014:10). Leading up to the 1996 Peace Accords between government and revolutionary forces, the Asamblea de la Sociedad Civil (ASC – Assembly of Civil Society) provided a participation mechanism for civil society in the Accords process. Women's organizations fought for and won their own sector in the ASC. Among other things, they demanded greater rights as citizens and the criminalization of sexual harassment and domestic violence. Meanwhile, participation in

the process exposed indigenous women to feminist ideas, which slowly they began to identify with and accept (Carrillo et al 2010:146-147).

Women's organizations pushed for the passage of the Anti-Femicide Law in 2008, which modernized and expanded legal definitions regarding violence against women, broadened protections for female victims of violence, obligated the state to prosecute all crimes listed therein, increased the severity of sanctions against perpetrators, and provides for more tools, resources, and structural mechanisms to assist victims and punish perpetrators (England 2014:136-137). A 2009 law clarified legal ambiguities by reforming the extant 1973 Penal Code, placing the question of character on the perpetrator, not the victim. From a de jure perspective, the international community and Guatemalan women's movement have effected changes (England 2014:138-139).

D. Legal Progress, De Facto Stagnation

Guatemala—Nonetheless, the Guatemala's women's movement has faced setbacks and challenges. A decade after Tajikistani society began reverting to patriarchal norms, the dawn of the 21st century saw a similar shift in Guatemalan social and political spheres (Destrooper 2014:11). Despite the creation in Guatemala of an executive branch secretariat to oversee women's issues, during the early 2000s paper promises resulted in few practical measures or legislation on women's concerns (Carrillo, et al 2010:149). Through negligence or lack of resources, the government did not implement many of the peace accords' provisions (Destrooper, et al 2018:324). Backlash to progress came at times from groups such as the Roman Catholic church, anti-abortion groups suspicious of family planning, and indigenous women. (Jocelyn recalled her mother saying that the

Roman Catholic Church was an early opponent of birth control.) Also, the movement's NGO-ization in the late 1990s bureaucratized it and may have fragmented it and caused "competition for scarce resources, resulting in a lack of long-term, coherent goals" (Carrillo, et al 2010:147-149). Further, despite some overlap, a sharp division remains in Guatemala between feminist organizations, whose priority is gender equality, and feminine organizations, which focus primarily on women's well-being within societal norms (Destrooper 2014:14). (These resemble early problems of Tajikistan's women's movement when a network of women's organizations who regularly met to strategize and share information had yet to construct an ideology from which to work, and when many women's organizations' memberships comprised urban, educated, middle class women whose interests may have differed from poorer and/or rural women who, at the same time saw them as condescending and/or having nothing to offer (Harris 2000:222-224).)

What is the de facto situation of women in Guatemala? A case study published in 2013 of adolescent Mayan girls from one region showed that despite knowing about birth control methods, family and social pressure, misinformation, rumors, lack of access, and suspicion keep young indigenous women from using it (Wehr, et al 2013:139 & 141). Another case study published in 2017 of the Chichicastenango municipality in Guatemala's Quiche region highlighted that efforts against gender-based violence have focused on state institutions and crisis situations, not on underlying societal issues (Seider 2017:88-89). The study also showed, citing 2007 statistics, that a higher illiteracy rate among indigenous women (58% compared to 38% of indigenous men) prevented them from serving in municipal organizations called COCODEs (Community Development Councils established by law in 2002 to empower poor, indigenous communities). Women

who did get elected to local office often could not attend meetings due to limited resources (Seider 2017:73, 75-76 & 80-81). COCODEs favored men and/or discouraged women from seeking legal redress in domestic violence disputes (Seider 2017:80). The leader of Chichicastenango's Municipal Women's Council (JDMM) said that women are discouraged from speaking out against male politicians. Other obstacles to filing complaints, as expressed by indigenous women, include men bribing justice department employees, women not having money, legal procedures conducted in Spanish instead of the women's native Mayan language, discrimination based on dress, and fear of men's reaction (Seider 2017:87-89). These issues may explain why, as late as 2011, sexual violence against women continued to increase (England 2014:140). The rate of femicide between 2008-2017 averaged 736 per year (Currier 2018). No doubt traditional attitudes and lack of funding and other resources to implement policy and program mechanisms contribute (England 2014:139).

Tajikistan—Obstacles remain despite some progress, and there have been setbacks. NGOs have had some success in raising public awareness regarding women's issues, for example, regarding domestic violence. The government has increasingly worked with in-country NGOs, although the government has promoted government-organized NGOs. NGOs have grown more competent, with more efficient management and increased annual reporting. Yet the Tajikistani government continues to view with a jaundiced eye any NGO activity seen as politically biased. In addition, many NGOs are still organizations of elite Tajikistanis, and most funding continues to come from outside the country (Dar 2013). In addition, most funding continues to come from outside the country. This latter situation poses obstacles in the form of increased scrutiny from the

Tajik government, as well as tight restrictions on political activities. Other challenges faced by NGOs include "[l]ow levels of volunteerism, resource constraints, and weak ties" (Dar 2013).

As in Guatemala, policy implementation in Tajikistan remains problematic for similar reasons. Gender policy has transcended the government ministries specifically associated with gender issues, but many government officials treat it as a checklist item not taken too seriously. Resources for gender policy implementation are also scarce, including those to provide support for victims of domestic violence (Direnberger 2019:46-47). Some advances appear to be token—for example, a 2012 law passed on domestic violence prevention stemmed from the lobbying of an international organization hired by Tajikistani intermediaries more interested in propping up Tajikistan's human rights image than in effective legislation. Gender experts denounced the lack of inclusion of women's associations in work on the bill, as well as "the method chosen to fight violence against women . . . and the lack of provision for implementation resources or procedures," something that was also noted in a Human Rights Report after a 2015-2019 investigation on the situation (Direnberger 2019:52; Swerdlow 2019).

Communications with a Tajikistani gender expert in a beta study confirmed these problems. Regarding women in government, she stated that, while gender quotas require women to be in half of ministry positions, "it is not happening." She added that Tajikistan is concerned about its image internationally, and it is showing that it is trying to follow UN bodies' recommendations. Things have improved – "on paper." Nonetheless, in response to a question on whether there has been a net gain or loss in women's rights since Tajikistan's independence, she replied that women's status and freedoms have

regressed since the transition to democracy period in the early 2000s. She connected this regression to the increasing role of conservative Islam in Tajik society, and with it, security concerns on the part of the government. Since 2010, the government has become stricter, writing laws ostensibly to curb the spread of terrorism/extremism. However, this movement has negatively impacted civil liberties, e.g., the heavy restrictions on peaceful protests. In addition, when NGOs have donors, their programs are successful. Once donor money runs out, however, the government does not take up and systematize NGO programs for women. In toto, the women's rights' situation in Tajikistan is worse now than ten years ago (personal communication with author, November 2019). Berina alluded to a need for civil society to participate in implementation when she stated, "The government sends reports on the progress made on [CEDAW's] implementation, women's organization have united to offer a different perspective (interview with author, September 2020).

II. Field Interviews: Guatemalan and Tajikistani Gender Experts, Social Workers, and Emigrant Widows

A. Systemic Repression

Guatemala—My interview data indicate that Guatemalan society has not prioritized education. According to Jocelyn, while *primarias* are public and free (elementary school for ages 7-12; kindergarten not included), *básicos* (middle schools/junior highs for ages 13-15) are not public, and not all communities have them. Families must pay for school supplies (even in *primaria*), food, uniforms, extra-curricular activities, and, for those living in communities without a *básico*, transportation. Anastasia, a social worker, noted that fifteen years ago, far fewer children attended

school because “times were harder.” Emigrant widow Ester gave additional insight into the harder times, explaining that she only went to school for two years total. Her parents, she said, would travel to the coast to work. They gave their children the option of staying behind to attend school, but the children wanted to be with their parents.

Yet the interviews also supported the notion that women, particularly indigenous women, face additional educational disadvantages. Jocelyn stated that women’s right to education came many years after men’s, and that this contributes to problems even today. She highlighted that while her parents, who had spent time in urban areas and observed the educated daughters of Ladino families, helped her and her sister to become professionals, most women in rural areas have limited access to education. Jocelyn explained that girls are viewed as a financial burden. The traditional cultural view is that girls will “just” get married and not generate income, so their time is better spent learning domestic skills. Spending money to send them to school is therefore a waste. Anastasia confirmed that that is why girls get less schooling than boys (although she also said that things have begun to change in the past fifteen years). Anastasia’s colleague, Manuela, added that until recently, schools in Mayan regions taught in their native language, not in Spanish. Thus, many women over the age of forty speak no Spanish. Younger women speak some—not well—but enough to converse. Others understand but cannot speak Spanish, she observed. Jocelyn told me that this language barrier has resulted in women not getting their children vaccinated, taking care of other healthcare matters, or reporting domestic violence.

My interviews in Spanish with seven emigrant widows in one department where Jocelyn works bore out these educational and linguistic disadvantages. One spoke no

Spanish; Jocelyn had to interpret the entire interview from the regional Mayan language into Spanish. Of the other six, only two spoke Spanish readily enough for me to conduct the entire interview on my own. They were also the only two participants to have gone to *básico*, and then only for one year (till seventh grade). The other four emigrant widows spoke varying degrees of limited Spanish, and Jocelyn had to interpret/clarify some questions in their Mayan language.

Jocelyn explained that the rural Guatemalan woman's identity is tied to having a husband and children—otherwise, she is not a woman. Girls face heavy pressure to be married, formally or informally, by age eighteen, or they risk not ever finding a husband. By their late twenties, they should have four children. Jocelyn reported even seeing families of girls as young as thirteen who saw their daughter talking to a boy one-on-one and, for fear of the girl getting pregnant, forced her to "present" him to the family with the expectation that they would marry. (Jocelyn was able to persuade one such family not to pressure the young people to marry.) Anastasia said that she has seen families forcing young couples to marry, but only if the girl is pregnant.

Once married, Manuela stated that while couples in urban areas find their own lodgings, in rural areas, they live with the husband's parents. They may just share a patio (the couple has a separate building), and then the wife can go out as she pleases. If they live in the same building, however, she may not, and the mother-in-law may be "in charge" of the wife. Similarly, Anastasia said that in rural Guatemala, wives cannot leave the house without their husbands' permission, although in communities where her NGO has been working for several years, up to 40% of couples operate on a more egalitarian basis. Yet, even in those families, the wife may only visit family members if her husband

is in town and gives the OK, but she may not go out to socialize with friends. Jocelyn and Anastasia agreed with emigrant widows Juana, Amalia, Ester, Liliana, and Marlene that in their culture, men work outside the home to provide for the family, and women care for the home, children, and animals. Liliana added that women do not work outside home, and similarly, Juana said that she never expected to have to work. Manuela and emigrant widow Graciela took a more moderate view: different couples decide how to divide family responsibilities in different ways.

Regarding cultural norms for men, Jocelyn divulged that, although it occurs more frequently in rural areas, many men in urban and rural areas—even some evangelical pastors, have two wives. Jocelyn explained that having more than one woman is tied to the *machista* ego—it means a man is more powerful. She recounted two instances of bigamy of which she personally knows. Her neighbor married a woman "in the church," but he is "married" informally to the woman's sister as well. Also, Jocelyn's coworker, a nurse, was making home health visits. In one home, the expectant mother welcomed the co-worker the first time she came. The second time, however, the woman verbally abused her and would not allow her to come in. The co-worker eventually discovered that the pregnant woman was her own father's second "wife." (Later, Jocelyn confirmed that bigamy in Guatemala is illegal, so marriages to second wives are "informal" (personal communications, March 2021).)

As to the influence of religion, Anastasia noted that some Guatemalans are religious, and some are not. She and Manuela listed the main religions in the regions they work in as Roman Catholicism, Protestantism/Evangelical, and Mayan paganism, Anastasia adding that Evangelical is most common. Jocelyn estimated that religion

accounts for 40% of the influence on rural Guatemalan families. Catholics and Protestants resist birth control assistance (not abortion, which is illegal in Guatemala) because it is "killing a baby," and "God says in the Bible . . . to multiply" (interview with author, August 2020). However, Jocelyn emphasized that while religion may strongly influence family decisions, culture does more to define gender roles. She elaborated that children learn gender inequality in the home by "absorbing" it, not through direct teaching. Similarly, although Manuela noted that men are more religious when it comes to "forbidding" aspects of their women's grooming, e.g., styling of hair or nails, she and Anastasia affirmed that strict gender roles are more cultural than religious.

Jocelyn also described a "culture of silence" in which domestic violence is not reported or even acknowledged. My interview with Marlene, an emigrant widow, seemed to emphasize this culture of silence. When I asked about domestic violence in her community, she hypothesized that husbands might beat their wives for defending the children or for asking for money after he used all his money for alcohol. Marlene denied personally knowing of any domestic violence cases. Yet, she declined to allow me to record the interview, even after Jocelyn and I explained how the recording would be kept confidential. Jocelyn separately told me that Marlene told her that she was afraid her husband, who is in the United States, might somehow be able to get the recording. She did not tell Jocelyn why she did not want her husband to find out about it, and since he is distant, there could be no risk of imminent physical violence from him. She may have feared that he would verbally abuse her, refuse to send her money and/or decide not to return. Still, whether she has experienced domestic violence herself, she exhibited fear of

her husband knowing what she was doing and took steps that she believed would prevent her actions from becoming public.

I asked Jocelyn if any progress has been made to address systemic repression of women. She replied that Guatemala has great legislation on that front—the problem is application. She cited high rates of malnutrition in her region as an example of how more pressing problems can subordinate women's rights issues. Additionally, stereotypes learned at home across generations take time to change, and some churches, both Catholic and Protestant, still preach that women should stay at home, be submissive, and have neither power nor vote. In some churches, she continued, men are seated in more prominent seats than women, and some of the main religious figures, both Catholic and Evangelical, are some of the worst perpetrators of domestic violence. Anastasia, however, detailed the progress she has seen over the past decade in the villages in which she works, affirming that the government and NGOs have helped bring more equality in homes between husbands and wives and have increased the number of girls in school.

Tajikistan—In education, Tajikistan presents a sharp contrast to Guatemala in some ways, though some similarities exist. Berina, a gender expert, explained that while post-independence economic reasons caused many girls to drop out of school, now all Tajikistani children must attend school till at least ninth grade, and young people cannot legally marry before age eighteen. Berina added that the boy/girl ratio in elementary school is even, although fewer girls than boys attend school, as in Guatemala. Also, like Guatemala, financial constraints may contribute to educational limitations even for grade school, according to Berina's colleague, Aleah. She said that although public education is

free, there are "expected" extras that parents must pay for such as holidays and teachers' birthdays.

The two countries appear to share a cultural attitude towards female education, especially in village/rural areas. Discussing the cultural perspective on female education, social worker Dilruba stated almost verbatim a sentiment I had heard in Guatemala from all three social worker interviewees: "They [parents] always say, 'there is no need for a girl to study. She has to stay at home, learn the housework, help her mother, and then get married" (interview with author, August 2020). Social worker Laleh explained that middle class parents have the same attitude towards sending their daughters to the university for their daughters: "She [daughter] will get married; she doesn't need anything [university degree]" (interview with author, August 2020). Laleh noted that while Tajikistan's government is strict about the mandatory schooling till ninth grade, girls in rural areas do not "study well." Her colleague Dilruba added that in more isolated areas such as in the mountains, girls only go till fourth grade, although Niloufar, another social worker, indicated that even in villages girls may only get a fourth-grade education. (Tajikistani interviewees tended to differentiate populations using three geographical descriptions: 1) the city/Dushanbe/the capital, 2) villages, and 3) rural areas. Occasionally they would describe a fourth, the "suburbs" or "villages on the outskirts" of Dushanbe.) The three Tajikistani emigrant widows I interviewed had a higher level of education than those in Guatemala: two had a university degree, and the other had completed all eleven years of public school. However, the Guatemalan sample came from a remote, rural area, while the Tajikistani sample came Dushanbe, Tajikistan's capital, and the surrounding region.

In Tajikistan, education seems more directly tied to religious practices and their impact on culture. Farhad, the NGO worker in Tajikistan who coordinated the interviews, commented during one interview that Tajikistani culture does not allow for an independent lifestyle. It is about community. He estimated that around 70% of Tajikistanis attend mosque regularly, many to prove their devoutness to their neighbors. Around 50% pray the five times a day required by Islam, while around 30% are educated and/or not too religious. This practice may correlate to an observation by Niloufar, a social worker, that with so many people in the capital, it is easier to be a non-Muslim—one does not stand out as much—but in the villages, non-Muslims hide their faith. However, according to Aleah, what most people think of as religious practices are actually traditions. Laleh pointed out that until recently, Tajikistanis could only access the Qur'an in Arabic. Most of them do not speak Arabic, so people did not know what the Qur'an says, and few men are willing to study the Qur'an. The majority accept whatever a mullah teaches, but most mullahs are uneducated and learn from similarly uneducated mullahs. Similarly, women accept the teaching of a mullah's wife. Laleh added that men explain religious beliefs to women however they wish. Farhad likewise affirmed that women, who are not allowed in mosques, learn religious beliefs either from their husbands, at women's gatherings, or from women teachers who may illegally come to teach them. Dilruba elucidated: men "teach" their wives ideas not in the Qur'an using Muslim literature such as journals or newspapers. This practice may stem from the fact that, according to Berina, Tajikistani men feel pressure to continue traditions.

This religious and educational disenfranchisement of women exemplifies their lack of agency in Tajik culture, particularly in rural areas. Laleh and Dilruba said that

girls have little choice in their marriage. Emigrant widows Aryana and Mahtob (with her first husband) had no choice in their marriages. The third emigrant widow, Afsaneh, said that her mother, a widow, let her decide when her now-parents-in-law approached her mother about marrying their son. However, Afsaneh had failed her first attempt at the university entrance exam and did not see any other future for herself. Both gender experts and Laleh explained that girls are expected to become housewives according to what Berina described as "unwritten laws." These include, according to Laleh, Mahtob, and Yasmina (the interpreter for most of my Tajikistan interviews), social pressure for women to marry by their early twenties.

In Tajikistan, a housewife is expected to cook and clean for their parents-in-law as a *kelin*, or daughter-in-law, Aleah told me. Laleh and Dilruba explained that the *kelin's* purpose is to be a slave to her husband and his parents. Dilruba gave further details: all newlyweds live with the husband's parents for at least the first three year and longer if his parents are sick or old. The daughter-in-law is slave to the mother-in-law, who even has the right to beat her. The mother-in-law's level of education, Dilruba said, makes no difference—some uneducated mothers-in-law treat their daughters-in-law well, while Dilruba's own mother-in-law, an educated woman, beat and cursed her. Berina and Laleh also mentioned the psychological violence or harshness many women endure from their parents-in-law, Berina adding that some mothers-in-law restrict their daughters-in-law from leaving the house.

As in Guatemala, social mores in Tajikistan often keep women home-bound. Aleah mentioned that rural women are not allowed to go alone to conduct business with public officials, e.g., to register a child's birth, because it is a man's place to interact with

the authorities. Dilruba noted that if a woman outside her house receives a compliment from a man, it maligns her morality and can equate her to a prostitute. This belief can lead to her husband beating her. Many women are thus afraid to work outside the home, Dilruba said. She added that in her own marriage, her husband and mother-in-law did not allow her to work, and her father would not let her mother leave the house. Aryana explained that the culture says a woman should not go out. Afsaneh expounded: the religion [Islam] says a wife should not go out without her husband's permission. She expressed her belief that she has a better chance of going to heaven if she follows that rule (and others), although her husband allowed her to go out before he went to Russia.

As discussed in Chapter 2, most interviewees discussed the precarity of a wife's position, especially that of a first wife. Laleh implied a utilitarian mentality of disposability towards first wives, stating that in the case of divorce, a husband finds another wife to serve his parents. To illustrate, Laleh mentioned a woman she knows who is a second wife. The woman insists that her husband loves her because she cooks "nice" for him and takes care of him, but he does not love his first wife, who is busy with children, housework, and her parents-in-law. Nonetheless, my interview with Mahtob, an emigrant widow who is also a second wife, suggested that second wives fear divorce as well. Mahtob did not initially know that her current husband had another wife. When she found out, not only would her husband not let her go, but Mahtob did not want to leave him in part because she was concerned about the future of her children. Mahtob expressed several times that she now wants and has tried to divorce her husband. However, she said that she feels forced to stay with him because, like other women, she fears gossip. Gossip for a divorced woman, Laleh explained, means that they lose their

reputation and "ruin" the family. As discussed in Chapter 2, women also fear for divorce because of its implications for their own and their children's physical and financial wellbeing. Laleh said that around 10% of divorced women commit suicide, at which point the women's families will take their children. Similarly, Berina noted that in rural areas where women are less likely to have a legal marriage with the commensurate rights to financial support for themselves and their children, many women choose suicide if they cannot return to their own families, who may not have room for them.

A man, however, has a much more secure position in Tajikistani culture. Aryana juxtaposed the difference between men and women by saying that a man is to be respected and treated well, but a woman is nothing, and "you can beat her if you want" (interview with the author October 2020). Like Afsaneh, Laleh used the word, "king," to describe the traditional male role in Tajikistani culture, adding that a wife must obey even senseless commands her husband gives her. Similarly, Mahtob said that a man is "king of the house," and Niloufar described him as "owner, lord."

Has there been any success in addressing the systemic repression of women in Tajikistan? Berina had an overall positive outlook, saying that the Soviet legacy of progressive rights for women has not deteriorated from a governmental standpoint. Nonetheless, she admitted that the biggest problem with progressive laws is implementation because of traditional stereotypes. For example, Laleh commented that some families pay officials to change their daughters' birth certificates to marry them off younger than the legal age. Likewise, I heard multiple examples from the interviewees of how many Tajikistanis do not follow laws regarding family matters, including the instances mentioned above regarding underage marriages and polygamy. Still, during one

interview, Laleh, Farhad, and Yasmina discussed a law passed three years previously that does not allow children under the age of 18 to attend religious services. Farhad noted that the law's purpose is to prevent religious leaders who speak out against politicians to easily influence children, and Laleh added that since the law passed, harassment of women on the street without hijabs and/or in jeans or dresses has declined. It is possible, then, that other positive effects for women may develop over time from this and similar legislations.

B. Economy: Family Finances and Women's Labor

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, several socioeconomic factors and cultural expectations impact family finances in both Tajikistan and Guatemala. Both countries have high levels of labor emigration, a paucity of jobs for people of all education levels, and high corruption which affects healthcare access. While Tajikistani wage earners also face low salaries for the few jobs available, Guatemalan agricultural workers similarly earn a subsistence income that schooling for older children, poor crop yields, or serious illness can over-tax. Cultural norms surrounding sons' marriages, including a bride-price and a large celebration additionally squeeze Tajikistani family finances. In both countries, men may have more than one wife/significant other in the sending country.

Regarding women's economic independence, the previous section of this chapter covers related topics, such as educational costs and the cultural preference for boys over girls to continue schooling in both countries. In Tajikistan, poor families may marry off underage daughters, either in religious-only ceremonies or by bribing officials to alter their daughters' birth certificates (although Berina said the latter is rare). Guatemalan girls face heavy social pressure to marry early, and in some situations, their families may

force them to do so. While in Tajikistan, marriage cannot legally happen before age 18, some parents ignore it and the pressure for girls goes further: most women's families choose when and whom they will marry. Many of my Guatemalan interviewees additionally stressed the prevalent stereotype, mainly in rural areas, of the husband as family wage-earner/provider. Although only two of the ten Tajikistanis with whom I spoke—social worker/emigrant widow Dilruba and emigrant widow Mahtob—expressly stated that a man's traditional role is to provide financially for the family, other statements detailed below imply a similar, though not identical, cultural mindset. Too, factors affecting women presented above on education, a wife's/daughter-in-law's role, and her ability to leave the house can prove limiting. The following section provides additional information garnered from my interviews relating to family finances and women's labor.

Tajikistan—Control of household finances seems to reside with the husband or one or both of his parents. This arrangement even applies to children's healthcare; Aleah noted that a mother's husband or parents-in-law make those decisions, even if a child is severely ill. Dilruba said that the husband provides the family's money. He may control the finances, or his mother may force him to give her his salary. In Mahtob's first marriage, she said her husband made the financial decisions, although her husband would always buy alcohol. Therefore, sometimes his father took control and would just buy what Mahtob and her husband needed instead of giving them money. Aryana said that her husband controlled the finances before he went to Russia, and Afsaneh implied the same, saying that her husband sometimes gave her money to buy things before he emigrated. Afsaneh also said that the other men in the household, her brothers-in-law, contribute to

family expenses: one is working with her husband in Moscow, one is a waiter in Dushanbe, and the youngest is a student.

Women do contribute in some instances, however. Dilruba related that while women's complete responsibility to care for the house, children, and animals leaves little time to work, village women can work in their neighbors' fields and receive some of the produce as compensation. A few have skills, such as sewing, that can be done from home that they can market to neighbors. Aryana said that early in her marriage when her husband was in Tajikistan but could find no work, she would make *sambusas* (Tajik stuffed pastries) to sell at the bazaar. She has also sold clothing at the bazaar and worked as a babysitter and Sunday school teacher since becoming a Christian. Niloufar, now an entrepreneur and NGO coordinator, mentioned how she would cook dinner for her husband between her day job with a different NGO and her evening job selling clothing. Although Mahtob said that it is rare for both parents to work, her mother, a nurse, worked before having children and after her children became adolescents. Mahtob herself worked as a kindergarten teacher during her first marriage, but she said that her husband did not mind because the staff were all females. She also worked during her second marriage, contributing food to her parents'-in-law's household until her pregnancy and her husband's emigration to Russia.

Nonetheless, socialization seems to matter, including the de-emphasis of education for girls mentioned above because of the expectations that Berina, Aleah, Laleh, Dilruba, and Mahtob mentioned: girls are expected to marry and be housewives, and/or a that culturally, a women's role is to serve her husband and/or parents. In fact,

Laleh said that such expectations can constitute an obstacle her organization faces in trying to help emigrant widows by training them to start their own business:

> [O]ften they are scared of taking responsibility. They do not have an education. They do not understand how to run this business . . . however you try to explain it, they do not understand this, and . . . it's not about knowledge, just they're scared, or . . . they're in position [sic] like they are not ready to get to work themselves, you know? Like, they are users; you give them, and they use this; they do not want to do anything themselves (Laleh, interview with author August 2020).

She added that women are socialized to go to school till ninth grade, marry, have children, and die. Emigrant widow Afsaneh seemed to confirm this mindset. When asked, she said that her husband would allow her to work if she wanted to, but she does not want to because he provides everything. She also, however, added that she would want her daughter to study to be able to be financially independent.

Guatemala—Interviewees' responses in Guatemala here indicated more variation in Guatemala than in Tajikistan regarding how couples manage household finances and related decisions. Social worker Manuela maintained that gender roles vary depending on a family's choice or configuration. Yet, she stated that when children are sick or need something, the mother must inform the father when he gets home from work, implying that he must at least be consulted. In my beta study, Jocelyn had informed me that this can jeopardize a child's life, for even if a child requires urgent medical attention, if the father is not home, many mothers will refuse to take him to the doctor until they can consult with their husband (interview with author, July 2019). Anastasia viewed this aspect slightly differently, saying that both parents make decisions regarding their

children's health, although the husband has more control over financial decisions and is traditionally the highest authority in the household. Similarly, Manuela stated that some couples make household decisions together; while for others, only the man does. This arrangement applies even to the decision for a husband to emigrate abroad to work. Manuela described situations in which a wife prefers that the husband stay, but because he wants more land, a bigger house, or a better life, he goes; in other situations, she said the couples decide together.

Emigrant widow Juana did not directly address decision-making in the household. However, she did discuss a debt her husband had that she neither knew existed nor ever learned what it was for, yet (as further detailed in the next subsection) it caused her to lose her home. Similarly, emigrant widow Ester said that, without consulting her, her husband decided when she was pregnant with their fourth child that he would emigrate so he could earn enough money to buy them land and build a house. Marlene and Amalia, however, said that her husband's decision to emigrate was a joint decision. Liliana related that before her husband emigrated, he would make the decision for them to go to the market or town to buy what was needed around the house, implying that while he made the decision, he included her in the process of carrying it out.

Yet, my interviews did yield some evidence of women contributing to their families' income, albeit, in most cases, prior to marriage. Manuela noted that sometimes in households with several daughters, some of them may work outside the home. Especially if there are daughters-in-law in the home as well, the women take turns preparing meals. Then, the mother and daughters-in-law handle the cooking, giving the daughters more freedom. Ester, whose parents worked in fields on coast recalled that she

had gone to the capital to work "of necessity," and she met her husband after a year and a half there. She told me that she had three her children there before the family returned to the region where she and her husband had both grown up, but she did not indicate whether she continued working after meeting her spouse. Amalia said that, before meeting her husband, she went to work in the capital to help with family expenses since her dad was sick and they had no food. Marlene related a similar situation: her father died when she was twelve. Her mother began earning money doing laundry, but it was not enough to support the five children. So, to help her mother, Marlene quit school, and at age thirteen, went to the capital to work doing housekeeping. Eva also worked in the capital, where she also met her significant other. Graciela was the only emigrant widow who mentioned women working after marriage, saying that different couples do it differently – in some families, both husband and wife work outside the home, but in others only the husband does while the wife occupies herself with the house, the children, and the cooking.

Nonetheless, as in Tajikistan, cultural norms in Guatemala appear to dictate that once married, rural women have limited scope to work outside the home. As discussed in the previous subsection, many married women may have to ask permission from their husband or mother-in-law to go outside the house. Also, Jocelyn, Manuela, and Anastasia noted that the expectation that girls will marry, have children, and take care of the house has made girls' education not prioritized. Jocelyn noted that because of this educational disadvantage, rural women have difficulties finding ways to earn income outside of the domestic arts, yet these jobs are mostly in urban areas. Additionally, she said, having weak Spanish language skills handicaps their employability. Manuela agreed that many

women over age forty in villages where she works cannot speak/understand Spanish, and that often, they have few employable skills. In addition to educational deficits, social norms seem to matter. Emigrant widow Juana said that she did not work before she was married and never expected to work—she never expected to do anything other than be a housewife. Amalia avowed that women are supposed to care for children and animals at home, and Ester, Liliana, and Marlene made similar statements. Liliana added that in her region, women do not work outside the house, and that she agrees with this idea. Marlene, who talked about working in the capital, said she quit once she returned to her home region and got married.

III. Conclusion

Despite differences in Tajikistan's and Guatemala's languages, religions, histories, and cultures, women in these two countries face nearly parallel systems of repression, especially in non-urban areas. In Guatemala, as in Tajikistan, women continue to face social and economic disadvantages. These considerations, along with legal and political barriers, especially for women living in rural areas (who, in Guatemala, are mainly indigenous) mean they are more likely to underreport and endure domestic violence. Yet, for those women who stay in their home country, but whose husband or domestic partner emigrates to work in another country, how do these social, economic, legal, and political obstacles affect their lives? Chapter 5 takes on this discussion.

CHAPTER 5

Emigrant Widows: Effects of Labor Migration and Support in Guatemala and Tajikistan

> Interviewee: *[My in-laws] took out a loan . . . It was best for me to leave the house. It was our house, for my kids, but they needed the money to pay off [my husband's] debt with a guy.*
>
> Interviewer: *What was the debt . . . ?*
>
> Interviewee: *I don't know . . . He had the family do it without me having any idea.*
>
> – Emigrant Widow, *Interview with author, July 2020*

How do emigrant widows in countries with structural, systemic repression of women survive? In this chapter, against the backdrop of the structural disenfranchisement of women resulting from the historical, social, economic, legal, and cultural dynamics heretofore discussed, I focus on the effects on women of the emigration of their husbands/significant others. Using interviews with key informants and subject matter experts conducted from June through October 2020 in Guatemala and Tajikistan, I first look at emigrant widows' financial situation, living conditions, and other physical circumstances as a continuation from the prior chapter before turning to the social and emotional effects of their partners' absence. Then, I discuss any social or material support available to emigrant widows.

I. Trends: Men's Migration and Family Finances

Guatemala—When men emigrate to the United States, how long do they stay away, and do they achieve their financial goals?[36] What is their families' living situation

[36] While destinations for labor migration from Guatemala include Guatemala City, Mexico, and other places, interviewees almost exclusively focused on the United States. Therefore, I will use the U.S. when discussing the destination location of labor migration.)

in their absence? Jocelyn explained: while some men have their wife and youngest child join them abroad and around 20-30% eventually return to their families, probably 60% of husbands gradually abandon their families completely. The first year to year and a half after the husband leaves, he focuses on paying off his "coyote" debt; the second through fourth/fifth year, he sends money home to his family to buy land, build a house, etcetera. However, after that he starts calling less frequently, and by year five he finds another woman in the U.S and starts another family.

According to Manuela, husbands who include their wives in their decision to emigrate more often achieve their intended purpose than those who do not, but they may be gone from six to twenty years; she estimated that around 25% of men do not return until "they are old," and another 25% come back sooner. First, a migrant laborer must pay the coyote 40,000-50,000 quetzales[37], so it can take between twelve to eighteen months before he begins sending money to his family. Manuela added that some husbands make regular remittances and achieve family goals such as a house or investing in children's schooling. Still, other husbands do not plan well. Like Jocelyn, Manuela noted that after five or six years, and once their Guatemalan family has a house, some husbands stop sending money since by then they also have a U.S. family; still others pay their "coyote" debt, send an occasional bit to their family, but ultimately "disappear." Anastasia, who said that most women are emigrant widows in the villages where she and Manuela work, affirmed that some husbands do stop sending remittances, but most leave for five to twelve years before coming home to stay.

[37] One quetzal = approximately $0.13 per Business Insider's currency converter (https://markets.businessinsider.com/currency-converter/guatemalan-quetzal_united-states-dollar, accessed 3/12/21).

Anastasia and Manuela discussed different living arrangements for emigrant widows and their children. Anastasia said they may live with either the wife's or the husband's parents. Manuela noted that some emigrant widows live under their in-laws' control, and the father-in-law decides, for example, to take a child to the doctor. However, other women live apart and make decisions regarding the children. Anastasia concurred with Manuela that the wife has control if she lives alone with her children. However, if her husband stops sending money, the children may end up without food and shelter. Then the wife must take responsibility for the family. Anastasia agreed that some husbands are responsible about sending money, but she added that these men's wives usually fear to leave the house for reasons discussed below. Nevertheless, things materially improve for the family in these situations; they can buy land, build a house, and adequately provide for the children's needs. If a husband keeps sending remittances, he also makes family decisions, except in emergencies (e.g., a child becomes ill), and if the wife lives in a renthouse or with her parents-in-law, they control the family finances.

Tajikistan—Tajikistan's migration patterns and remittance trends differ slightly from Guatemala's, although remittance purposes and usage in the two countries are nearly identical. Whereas many Guatemalan migrant workers emigrate illegally, thereby incurring a debt to their smuggler or "coyote," per gender expert Aleah, Tajikistani workers may legally emigrate across state borders. Difference in legal status may also drive the more cyclical nature of Tajikistan's labor migration that I inferred from remarks made by Aleah. When discussing domestic violence (noted in Chapter 2), she mentioned that many men engaging in seasonal labor migration normally are gone for long periods

during the year, but that people who normally go to Russia during the time of year when I interviewed her (summer) could not travel due to the pandemic.

Laleh noted several emigrant financial goals/remittance patterns: 1) in families with multiple married sons, some sons will go to Russia to earn money to afford living arrangements separate from their parents; 2) some will go to pay off the debt for their wedding, and 3) children who do well in Russia remit to allow their parents invest in land, crops, and cattle. Dilruba confirmed the latter trend and gave additional details on emigration patterns. She noted that men who emigrate generally have only a ninth- or an eleventh-grade education. They return after one to five years, or perhaps never. Many go to Russia after ninth grade, she added, to save up money to marry. Niloufar agreed that men emigrate to pay off their wedding debt or to buy land and build a house. She calculated that around 30% of male emigrants go before marriage to save up for their wedding. Laleh also remarked that men with families in both countries, as further detailed below, may spend up to three or four years at a time in Russia.

As to destination, Laleh stated that most Tajikistani migrant workers go to Russia and some to Kazakhstan. Aleah also mentioned Russia as the migrant laborers' destination, but Niloufar noted that richer or middle-class young people try to go to Korea, the United States, Germany, or other western countries, especially when they are students. She related this tendency to the lack of jobs even for educated people in Tajikistan. She and Yasmina, who was interpreting the interview, also noted that some young people apply for refugee status in Germany by claiming to be homosexuals, who face persecution in Tajikistan. They also noted that because Tajikistanis are heavily discriminated against and fall victims to hate crimes in Russia, only the poorest emigrants

go there. Since Laleh had noted that subsistence farming regions comprise the main migration sending areas in Tajikistan, and Dilruba similarly observed that most migrant laborers come from villages and rural regions, this points to Russia as the main destination of migrant laborers.

Unlike Guatemalans, according to Aleah, most Tajikistani emigrant husbands send money to their families back home, although occasionally they die or "disappear" due to second family abroad. If so, Aleah stated, the children left in Tajikistan must work, and UNICEF is working on an initiative to help in these situations. Also, Laleh noted that men with second wives in Tajikistan abandon them if the men start another family in Russia. She estimated that while 30-35% of men in Tajikistan have multiple wives, up to 50% of those who go to Russia do, since many men marry in Russia. Farhad, who facilitated the interview, and Yasmina, the interpreter, clarified at this point that often men marry women in Russia to get documents to facilitate their living arrangements.

Meanwhile, as in Guatemala, emigrant widows in Tajikistan usually live with their husbands' parents, who control the finances, the wife's actions, and family/household decisions, per Tajikistani gender experts and social workers. Wives usually live their in-laws, Laleh said, and the husband's authority over his wife transfers to father, brothers, or mother. Dilruba also noted that a wife's parents-in-law control her while her husband is gone. Laleh observed that emigrants' wives are financially dependent on their in-laws for the first few months of their husband's absence; it takes time for the husband to register to work and find job. Once the husband begins remitting, his mother controls the remittances and allocates to the wife as she sees fit. Dilruba confirmed the mother-in-law's control over her sons' remittances yet remarked that the

husband may also send remittance directly to his wife. Likewise, Niloufar affirmed that in the villages where she works, nearly 70% of emigrants' families live with the man's parents; only 30% live separately. According to her, remittances go to the wife's father-in-law, who controls family finances and other household decisions, with about a third of the money going to an emigrant worker's wife, and two-thirds to his parents. Similarly, Berina had told me that parents allocate more remittance money to their sons than to their daughters-in-law, especially in rural areas.

Aleah had told me that traditionally, a husband or his parents make decisions such as those regarding a child's or even a wife's healthcare; the wife does not, particularly in rural areas. If the husband is absent, either he or the wife will communicate his decision to his parents. Alternatively, his parents will make the decision and either they or the wife will let the husband know. In Aleah's words, "In most cases, it is not women who make decisions, in many cases, she even not involved in discussions [sic]" (personal communication, June 2020). Relatives do not allow women to get birth certificates for their children sometimes, a problem I detail further below.

II. Trends: Emigrant Widows' Socioeconomic Status

Tajikistan—Laleh explained that a second wife in Tajikistan must look for work once her husband emigrates, because she will get no help from anyone, especially since he and his family will abandon her if he starts another family abroad. Even for a first wife, if a husband is not sending enough money, her parents-in-law can get nervous or even act aggressively towards her, telling her that they do not have enough money to take care of her and the children. The in-laws may even do one of two things, Laleh said: 1), they may ask her and her children to leave; and/or 2) they may call their son in Russia

and lie that his wife acted in such a way that they asked her to leave. They can even call mullah with him on video chat to witness an Islamic divorce, whether the marriage was legal or not. As discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, divorce for rural Tajikistani women can have a significant socioeconomic and subsequent psychological impact, potentially leaving them homeless or leading them to commit suicide.

Laleh and Niloufar again noted that rural wives suffer in the labor market from educational disenfranchisement, as discussed in the preceding chapter. Also discussed in the previous chapter are the social risks women face when leaving the house if their husband is not in the country. This situation affects a woman's ability to support herself, Niloufar explained, for if an emigrant widow tries to work, the neighbors gossip that she is prostituting herself while her husband is in Russia. The situation is better in the capital Dushanbe where there are more opportunities for people and even children, Niloufar said. Still, according to Dilruba, women who work in the fields or sew for their neighbors, as discussed in Chapter 4, can do so whether their husbands are in Tajikistan or not.

Guatemala—As Anastasia mentioned, many emigrant widows in rural areas are confined to their houses. She added that a wife may be afraid to work outside the home because her husband will call and yell at her if she goes out. She and Jocelyn explained that this response relates to reflects jealousy and suspicion of infidelity in the husband's absence (see Chapter 3, section 5). Furthermore, Jocelyn said, a wife who lives with her husband's family may not go out without provoking the question "Are you going right away to find another man?" from her parents- and brothers-in-law. She and Anastasia both observed that neighbors or the husband's family may monitor her even if she lives separately from them to keep her husband informed if she goes out—unless he starts a

second family in the United States. Manuela made a similar point, adding that some husbands leave their mothers in charge of their wives (mainly in rural areas). A husband may not allow his wife to go out unless accompanied by his mother, and his remittances may go to his mother to give to his wife. A wife will endure this situation, Manuela said, for the sake of the children, e.g., so that they will have a house. Even if the family has its own house, some mothers-in-law will not let the wife live in it till the children have grown. Yet, Manuela stated that some wives start working and teach the children to work before their husband stops sending, so that if/when he does, it is not so hard a blow. Some husbands do not let their wife or children work, although some wives secretly do so anyway; if the husband finds out, he may stop sending money, and/or the parents-in-law may confiscate her earnings.

The lives of most rural wives become more difficult without a husband's income. Manuela stated that wives suffer if their husbands stop sending money since women rarely have many employable skills and will not earn much. If they live in a region with microenterprises, for example they may get a job sewing but if they do not know how to run a sewing machine, it will be an unskilled position, like sewing on buttons. In regions without microenterprises, earning money will be harder; available work would include things like doing laundry, housekeeping, day labor. Anastasia had a similar viewpoint, stating that single mothers have a hard time caring financially for their children. Doing laundry for others or engaging in farm labor can earn them some money, but perhaps not enough. Jocelyn mentioned other possible revenue sources for emigrant widows, such as selling something or working as a domestic servant. (However, most opportunities for the latter are in cities, as mentioned in Chapter 4.) Due to educational disenfranchisement,

Jocelyn said that many women have trouble reading receipts and letters or doing the basic math required to work at a business. Jocelyn emphasized that lack of proficiency or confidence in using Spanish can further disadvantage women, and it is hard for women with small children to work. Thus, many emigrant widows end up stuck at home raising animals.

III. Experiences: Emigrant Widows' Labor and Family Finances

Guatemala—When I spoke to Juana, her husband had emigrated four years previously. At first, she related, everything was fine, and her husband was sending money. Two years into his absence, though, he began drinking, and the money stopped coming. At her husband's behest, and without her knowledge, her in-laws took out a loan on the house where she and her children were living because of a debt her husband owed. Juana stated that she does not know what the debt was for, but "it was better for me to leave the house" (interview with author July 2020). She and her two children (her third child is deceased) went to her parents, who let her live in a small house with her brother. Despite never imagining that she would be anything other than a housewife, Juana now works every day washing clothes. She asserted that she now has no option—when I remarked on the fact that her children, now in their teenage years, have stayed in school in spite of financial hardship, she replied, "I go out and work so that they can study" (interview with author July 2020). Juana said that her children study at cheaper schools than they did previously, and they do odd jobs. If their father were in the picture, she added, he would send money, and it would be easier for the children, but even so, her children's life is not bad.

Ester was the only other emigrant widow I interviewed in Guatemala who said that she works outside the home. She has four children—the oldest is a teenager and the youngest is seven. Her significant other emigrated seven years ago, without consulting her, when she was pregnant with their youngest. She said that while it might have been necessary for him to go, he has not achieved any of his goals of buying land or building a house. When he left, she was living in another community with him and her in-laws, but she eventually decided to take the children and go live with her parents because of friction with her father-in-law. Her sister also lives there. Her husband, she added, barely sends expense money for the children. He used to consistently send them something every two weeks, but he has gotten inconsistent because he now has a wife "there," and sometimes he sometimes takes three weeks or up to a month between remittances. She explained that she occasionally sells a chicken/other animal when necessary, or sometimes she goes out to work doing laundry, cleaning, or something similar. She maintained that she perhaps could have worked if she did not have several young children, or if she had some financial assistance to get some land. Since Ester told me that she does work occasionally, it is unclear what she meant by saying she could have worked if she had more education. One explanation is that she could have engaged in skilled labor. Despite the financial hardships Ester described, however, she said that her children do not work – they go to school, and the oldest has a cell phone. As discussed below, the cell phone has pictures of the child's father on it sent via social media, so it may have been bought with money the father sent specifically for communicating with him or by a family member; however, Ester did not disclose how the cell phone was purchased.

Amalia told me that she does not work, but she cares for her animals at home. The oldest had a severe illness requiring weekly dialysis, which is why her husband had emigrated two years ago: they could not afford her treatment on his earnings as an agricultural laborer. She added that, at the time of the interview, he had no plans to return because he must pay off his [coyote] debt, their daughter was still stick, and they needed the money for expenses. Amalia told me that her husband works on a poultry farm and sends "enough," but not enough for food all the time. I asked if her land produces food for the family. She observed that the fields are small and yield some food for the family, but not enough for the whole year. Nonetheless, she stated that her three younger children, in their mid to late teens, do not work. They go to school, but the oldest, who is in her early twenties, does not because of her illness. Without following up, it is unclear how her children, who are well past the age of free public schooling, can study without working if the family barely has enough for food and the daughter's medical expenses.

Eva stated that she does not work "directly." She takes care of the children, the animals, and the crops, although she said she and her significant other have given some land to their two older children, and there is not much left. She has seven children, over half of whom are now adults. Her significant other emigrated to Boston three years ago because, as the children grew, their farm did not yield enough to cover all the family's needs. This circumstance may partly relate to her earlier statement about having given land to some of the children. Eva told me that her significant other does send her money, and this, plus her selling of animals before the pandemic, support her. Additionally, she said that one son works, but he earns only 50 quetzales a day and has his own expenses. Her significant other, she asserted, has thought about coming back, but she did not

indicate that he has any firm plans to do so. With several of her children in adulthood, it is not clear why only one is working or how increased expenses pushed her husband to emigrate.

Liliana related that she has five children from her first marriage, some of whom are grown. The youngest three live with her. She affirmed that although her current husband is not the children's father, he loves them as his own. She has been with her second husband, who was a farm laborer for others in Guatemala, for six years. She explained that he went to the U.S. because of increasing poverty six or seven months before our interview so they could have better life, and that he has tentative plans to return in five or six years. However, she acknowledged that the family's financial situation has not changed much; he only recently arrived at his destination and only works three or four days a week. He has his debt and bills to pay, so she cannot depend on his remittances, which are not enough. She identified as a housewife, adding that she sells animals when she needs money, but it is harder since the pandemic because she cannot go to market, and people go to individual houses to buy. As with Eva, with two of Liliana's children no longer at home, it is not clear what the "increasing poverty" of the family means.

Marlene, who has two pre-school children, likewise said that she does not work. Her husband had gone to the U.S. five months earlier because he could not find work and the family had nowhere to live. He plans to come back in four or five years. Marlene stated that the family's financial situation remains unchanged since he emigrated, but he arrived in the U.S. only one month before the pandemic. It is hard for him to find work, and he only works once or twice a week. However, he does send some money, which she

supplements by selling animals. Also, she lives with her mother, and she and her mother help each other. She explained that she had to quit school at age 13 to go work in the capital because her father died, and her mother could not earn enough doing laundry to support five children. Marlene explained "Since I couldn't study, my life would be different if I could [have] and I had a career. I only finished primary school" (interview with author July 2020). With Marlene's and Liliana's husbands gone only a short time, and especially given that they did so just before the COVID-19 pandemic, which is creating unusual social, labor, and economic conditions, the long-term economic effects on them cannot be determined.

Graciela described a slightly different situation than the other emigrant widow interviewees. She had been with her husband since age twelve and has three school-age children with him. She and her husband had marital problems, she said, and he left Guatemala with another woman two and a half years ago. He sends 300 quetzales[38] a month to each child and did so very consistently the first year after he emigrated, but not so much now. He still sends a little, but not enough. She sells a little corn and firewood and occasionally fowl or other animal to people who come to buy, and the family sometimes has eggs from the poultry to eat. She asserted that it is hard to survive but no different than when he was here. She said that her children are still in school, and the plan is for them to continue. Here, despite a rupture in the marital relationship, Graciela's husband did financially provide for his children when he initially emigrated. Although his remittances have since become irregular, it is unclear whether this is part of a pattern of

[38] One quetzal = approximately $0.13 per Business Insider's currency converter (https://markets.businessinsider.com/currency-converter/guatemalan-quetzal_united-states-dollar, accessed 3/12/21).

gradual abandonment described by the social workers, or if, as with the husbands of Liliana and Marlene, the pandemic is affecting his income.

Tajikistan—Dilruba's story illustrates some of the worst-case scenarios for emigrant widows as described by Tajikistani gender experts and social workers. It especially demonstrates how the ill will of a woman's in-laws can jeopardize her living arrangements. As detailed in an earlier chapter, Dilruba's mother-in-law abused her physically and verbally, and along with Dilruba's husband, she did not let Dilruba work. Dilruba did not mention any financial strain that elicited her being turned out of her home, but she recounted that her mother-in-law looked down on her because she was from a village and not Dushanbe like her husband's family. After Dilruba's husband went to Russia, Dilruba's brother-in-law got married and moved out of his parents' home. Her mother-in-law then asked that Dilruba and her children move out, but once Dilruba complied, her mother-in-law lied to Dilruba's husband and impugned her morality. Dilruba said, "[S]he called my husband, and she said, 'Oh, you see? That girl from village [sic], she wanted to live separate, what do you think, what is she doing now?'" (interview with author August 2020). The psychological abuse did not end there—Dilruba's husband and mother-in-law kept up a constant barrage of telephone calls to her asking where she was, what she was doing, how the children were, why she had gone to the bazaar, and where she had gotten the money to buy whatever she purchased there. Nonetheless, Dilruba's husband continued to send her money for their apartment and food. This support, Dilruba asserted, made her mother-in-law jealous, and her mother-in-law told Dilruba's husband to send the money to her to parcel out. She would call both Dilruba's husband and Dilruba to fight with them. Dilruba's husband could not take

Dilruba's side, she said, because of the cultural more that a son must always respect and defend his mother, even against his wife. The one time he did try to defend her, Dilruba stated that her mother-in-law began crying and told Dilruba's husband, "you can find another woman, but you cannot find a mother [sic]" (interview with author August 2020). This incident appears to fit what I mentioned in the preceding chapter: the societal utilitarian perception of a wife as disposable; in fact, Dilruba's husband had married a woman in Russia in order to get Russian citizenship. Dilruba and her husband eventually divorced; she got a job with the government and later, with the livelihood project helping women learn how to start a business to support themselves.

Mahtob, an unofficial second wife, told me that her life is hard because she must provide for her family's survival since her husband does not. She said that her husband went to Russia after they married ten years ago because his salary as a bus driver in Tajikistan could not support two wives. She related that he asked her to stop working when he went to Russia, but she stated that she also stopped working because she became pregnant. Since she told me that her husband has been going to Russia annually for years, and she has been working up until recently, it seems that her pregnancy may have spurred him to ask her to stop working this time, although there may be other factors that she did not mention[39]. Mahtob said that her brothers-in-law help her and her children financially more than her husband does, but not as much as she would like. After sending money to have a house built in Tajikistan for his first wife, her husband did, however, pay to have two rooms and a bathroom added to Mahtob's father's house, where she and her children

[39] Mahtob did not mention anything to make me think there might be other factors, but I am aware that there could be—a change in his work situation, rumors he may have heard about her, etc. I do not presume to know the reason he changed his mind about her working; however, since that is the only change that she mentioned in her situation, it seemed the most likely,

lived at the time. According to Mahtob, she makes the family financial decisions, but she does not live with her in-laws. Overall, my fieldwork investigations seemed to find less control by husbands' families over second wives such as Mahtob than over first wives. Until her pregnancy, Mahtob mentioned, she worked in the business started by the livelihood project that is administered by the social workers I interviewed, and from her income, she sometimes would help her husband's family with food.

Aryana said that her husband has gone to work in Russia several times for varying periods throughout their thirty years of marriage. As of October 2020, when I interviewed her, he had been there for over ten years, although he had come to visit the family the previous year for a month. The second time he went to Russia, Aryana recounted, he had been in Tajikistan for several years but could not find work in his trade as an electrician. She had been selling food at the bazaar, but it was around the time her second son was born, food was scarce, she was not eating, and she was sick and losing her teeth. Her husband told her to stop working and take care of herself, because he would go to Russia and send money. For a while, he would go annually to Russia from spring to November and return to Tajikistan during the winter months due to the cold Russian winters. He ultimately decided to remain in Russia without coming home seasonally, she asserted, to pay for both of her sons to study at the university. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, he could only pay for the older one's schooling since her sons are close in age. Aryana added that now, even though he is older and disabled, her husband works from Russia to support the whole family for financial reasons noted in previous chapters. He will return to Tajikistan when her younger son gets out of the army because, she said, "At least one [person] has

to be [in Russia] because the economy here is very bad" (interview with author October 2020).

The parents of both Aryana and her husband are dead, and she lives with her two sons, their wives, and one grandchild. Her husband had bought the land and started building the house they live in, but she stated that the house is unfinished and uncomfortable, e.g., it does not have adequate windows and is cold. Aryana discussed that she has worked outside the home, as noted in Chapter 4, and that she has done some of that work during years when her husband seasonally migrated. Her husband sends his remittances to her for her to administer, although she noted that he asked her what she spent the money on the first time he returned. Aryana did not state whether this arrangement was different when his parents were alive, although she did say that he administered the household finances when he was in the country. Thus, her position as matriarch of the family may explain their arrangement to some extent. However, it also may owe to the fact that neither Aryana nor her husband are following cultural norms. They are both Christians, and Aryana had pointed out that even before their conversion, her husband was a nominal Muslim and not religious.

Afsaneh's interview indicated that from a material perspective, her life has improved in some ways since her husband emigrated. He was in Russia when I interviewed her, and he had been there a couple of times before, she told me. As mentioned previously, he studied there before coming back to Tajikistan to work for five years, during which time they got married. At some point after that, he worked in Russia for two years, returned to Tajikistan for six months, and went back to Russia about a year before we talked. One of his brothers is working in Russia with him, she stated, adding

that the family has more money now with her husband in Russia. She and her brother-in-law's wife live with their parents-in-law and two of her husband's younger brothers, one of whom is a waiter and contributes to household finances. The other brother is a student, she said. According to Afsaneh, she lives a more restricted lifestyle since her husband emigrated. Her husband would give her money to buy nice things for herself when he was in Tajikistan, she affirmed. Now, remittances from her husband and his brother go to his parents. Instead of giving her money, they ask what she needs and buy it for her. She remarked that they do not allow her to go out because they are afraid that she will cheat on her husband in his absence, but she also remarked that she does not want to work since her husband is providing everything. As remarked earlier, her husband would occasionally beat her, but she did not comment on whether anyone else in the family abuses physically since he left.

IV. Trends and Experiences: Social and Emotional Impacts on Families

The wives or female significant others left behind by migrant laborers are the focal point of this chapter. However, because often their children are left along with them, this chapter would not be complete without looking at some of the effects of a father's long-term departure on his children, as these effects also bear on the mother's situation. Therefore, points made by interviewees regarding the children of migrant laborers are also briefly covered in this section.

Tajikistan—Because labor migration from Tajikistan tends to be more cyclical than that originating in Guatemala, effects on families of migrant laborers there differ from those in Guatemala, although a husband and father's absence can have both material and psychological effects. As mentioned in the previous section, Laleh remarked, that if a

father/husband is not sending "enough" money, his parents may force his wife and children to leave their home. If the wife/mother commits suicide, the children may live with the wife's family, provided the family has room. Berina likewise had said that women who are forced from their husband's family's home may live with their parents or commit suicide. As in the families of Guatemalan migrant laborers, Niloufar noted that in situations where emigrant widows live separately from their in-laws, because of the social risks associated with women going out and working their oldest son often takes responsibility.

There may be other material impacts on children. For example, Aleah stated that sometimes an emigrant widow's relatives do not allow her to get birth certificates for her children; in addition, women do not know how to register births, since tradition dictates that men, not women interact with government agencies. Aleah referenced a UNICEF project carried out in 2019 that had identified 3,700 children without birth certificates in sixteen districts of Tajikistan. She added that UNICEF estimates the number of these "invisible children" at around fifty thousand—and many of them are from migrant families. As noted in a previous chapter, obstacles to registration besides a woman's lack of knowledge on how to register a child's birth include informal fees for registering a birth or obtaining a birth certificate, late registration fines, and long distances to the nearest registration institution. Thus, even if a migrant labor himself tries to register his child's birth, if he has returned "too late" for the initial registration near the time of the child's birth, other factors may preclude getting the child registered. Children of migrant laborers may feel other socioeconomic impacts stemming from their fathers' absence.

Aleah had noted that the vast majority of emigrant husbands maintain contact with their families in Tajikistan. This contrasts with the tendencies of Guatemalan emigrant husbands. However, Aleah had added that occasionally a husband will die or disappear, and some of those disappearances occur when a husband starts another family abroad. Nonetheless, she stated that a UNICEF report from ten years ago shows that a father's absence psychologically affects a child. She believes that this situation has not changed, although she did not indicate what psychological effects a child of an absent father might experience. Niloufar's experience as the child of a migrant labor may give insight. During our interview, Niloufar cried as she recalled that as a child, she was always waiting for her father to return, and her mother was sick and depressed. Eventually, her father disappeared. Niloufar said that life without her father was so hard that she attempted suicide three times.

Dilruba's description of her experience as an emigrant widow paints a picture of emotional difficulty. She related that she married her husband because he was a Christian. She thought he would be different from other men in her culture, but he turned out to be a nominal Christian, she said. She added her husband's parents are not Christians, and they always pressured him to do things that go against God and the Bible. As mentioned in the previous section, Dilruba's mother-in-law abused her physically and verbally until she asked Dilruba to find her own lodgings. The verbal abuse continued from her mother-in-law, who also lied to Dilruba's husband and incited him against Dilruba. According to Dilruba:

> For fifteen years I lived in this pressure and I was patient, I thought . . . God changed him probably, and . . . something will change . . . . I saw that [my

> mother-in-law and husband] don't respect my children . . . . Even my husband, he didn't value them. He was in Russia. He married, and I was shocked because all this stuff, usually Muslims do, but he is Christian, and he married a woman in Russia, and I thought, it shouldn't be like this (interview with author, August 2020).

Now divorced and working for a non-profit, Dilruba asserted that she is happy, although things are still difficult for her. Nonetheless, Dilruba had said that her mother-in-law always looked down on her because Dilruba was not from Dushanbe. Therefore, beyond the increased opportunities that the absence of Dilruba's husband afforded his mother to manipulate him and cast aspersions on Dilruba's character, it is not clear whether Dilruba's situation as a married woman when her husband was present differed in any way socially and emotionally after he left.

Mahtob expressed unhappiness with her status as an emigrant widow, describing her life as "uncertain." However, she gave conflicting statements about her feelings for her husband. She stated that her husband comes to Tajikistan for one month out of every year, spending half the time with his first wife and half the time with her. He will continue to divide his time between them when he returns for good, she said. According to Mahtob, her husband is a liar, and even their school-age daughter understands that. On the phone, their daughter would tell him that she does not trust him when he said that he loves her and will come home. Now, their daughter does not even want to talk to him when he calls. Mahtob asserted that she wants to divorce her husband since he is not helping her, but he will not let her. Nonetheless, she told me that she wants her husband to live with her and her children both for material and emotional support, and she also

later noted that women fear gossip if they divorce. She mentioned that she misses her brothers who had recently died, and she discussed friendly, mutually supportive ties to her husband's family, including an amicable relationship with his first wife.

Aryana detailed the emotional difficulty of being separated from her husband. She expressed that his absence did not affect the children much when were young. She worried, however, especially when he traveled during the post-independence civil war. When he called her while briefly being held captive (during the incident narrated in Chapter 2), she said that she was "depressed" thinking he would be killed. Regarding his later decision to stay in Russia, she stated:

> When I asked him, "Why you don't want to come back?" he said that, "All my sons . . . need to enter the university, and I have to work here. I have to pay for study and everything." And he didn't come back for ten years, but last year . . . I asked him to go to Russia to visit him, he said, "No, I don't want you to come because here is no place to live. I live with men, and—here—I don't have any space for you." And then he came like for one month, and again, left the country [sic] (interview with author October 2020).

The fact that Aryana questioned his decision to stay, that she later requested to visit him, and that he subsequently visited the family suggests that their separation weighs on her. He could not even attend his oldest son's wedding, she explained. Although she initially denied that the distance strains their relationship, she then affirmed that problems arise in their relationship because they do not understand each other's situation sometimes. She does not always understand his situation in Russia; he takes her requests in a negative way at times, and then his reaction affects her. She gave an example: most of the family

in Tajikistan got sick with COVID-19, so she asked him to send money for medicine. He got upset, shouting that she knows everything is closed in Russia, and he is not working and has no money to send. Aryana stated that they cannot talk on the phone every day because the Internet is expensive, so they talk four or five times a month. She added that these are voice calls only unless her son is home with his phone; then they can video chat.

Afsaneh had said that before he emigrated, her husband would abuse her verbally and physically, but her discomfort when discussing emotional abuse may indicate that she faces some from others. At the same time, Afsaneh indicated that her relationship with her husband remains otherwise healthy. She expressed sadness that they are apart, but she stated that he continues to treat her as nicely as when he was here. They talk via video conference every two or three days, and once borders that closed due to the pandemic are open, he wants her to meet him in Russia for fertility treatment. Afsaneh also mentioned that she used to have friends, and she would want to go out and socialize if she could. Her husband, she said, would let her, but her parents-in-law will not.

Additionally, when I asked whether women in her village face psychological violence, explaining that such abuse could include manipulation through threats of physical violence, threats to withhold money or food, using guilt, or talking badly about loved ones, the interpreter Yasmina told me that Afsaneh seemed uneasy. Here I reproduce the transcript of that section of the interview, with Yasmina interpreting:

[Conversation in Russian between interpreter and interviewee]

Yasmina: I don't know. [Afsaneh] said in our family, we don't have this. She's saying all from—from her family. Like her husband, from her parents.

[Conversation in Russian between interpreter and interviewee]

Yasmina: Yeah, she—she, I think she—she's just hiding. I don't know why she's not comfortable. Maybe she thinks that—that, like, someone is hearing or . . . (interview with author, October 2020).

One possible explanation for Yasmina's observation about Afsaneh's unease on this topic is that Afsaneh knows about and/or is a victim or perpetrator of past or present emotional abuse in either her own or her husband's family. If so, her reluctance to speak may stem from either her fear of repercussions or her adherence to cultural norms of family loyalty. Also, I noted that when I asked her about psychological violence towards women in the community, she began talking about her family. However, time constraints and her discomfort made it impractical to continue that line of questioning for clarification. Thus, it is impossible to know if she is suffering abuse from her husband's family members, and if so, whether the absence of her husband cause or had any effect on the abuse.

Guatemala—Children left behind by Guatemalan migrant laborers may experience socioeconomic difficulties similar to those that pushed the migration of their fathers. These circumstances may push them towards continuing the cycles of poverty, criminal activity, and/or labor migration. Jocelyn observed that if an emigre husband has a wife, sometimes she and their youngest child will come to the U.S. after he is established, as discussed above. Then, she explained, the children who stay in Guatemala

seem to have everything – they have money from their parents in the U.S. However, the relative who raises them in Guatemala, especially if it is their grandmother, usually does not have the same time and energy as when she did for her own children. Many of these children "abandoned" by their parents have little desire to go to school past their mid-teen years, and a lot of the girls get married/pregnant by the age of 15 or16. Jocelyn added that if the parents in the United States subsequently have other children there, the parents' Guatemalan children will resent these younger siblings, because, for example, they see the difference between how their U.S. siblings' birthdays are celebrated and how their own are celebrated.

For children of migrant laborers whose mothers do not leave, Anastasia remarked that sometimes a relative other than their father may send them money from abroad. Yet if the mother must work, Manuela stated, some of the children [presumably the older ones] will watch the other children. Alternatively, if the grandparents live nearby, they may do so. The children may have to work, she added, noting that usually the oldest son is the one to work. Other possible scenarios include the children only studying through elementary school (sixth grade) or working during the week and doing their schooling on weekends. Anastasia similarly observed that if an emigrant widow mother is not earning enough on her own, sometimes her children must stop going to school, and the older children (ages twelve to fifteen) may work to help their mother. However, Manuela noted that if the children are smaller, the mother has greater difficulties: she must work more.

Manuela observed that sometimes children no longer recognize their father after he leaves. The father loses "authority" over their children, and the children may stop listening to their mother. As for the children's earning ability, she explained that fathers

normally teach their sons their trade or skill. In the father's absence, the mom may apprentice her son(s) to someone. Yet, some sons do not stick with the apprenticeship, Manuela explained, because they take the attitude that "Dad is not here," and without accountability, they begin spending time with the wrong crowd. (Manuela did not define what she meant by "the wrong crowd.") She added that in these cases, sometimes a boy's grandfather steps in, but doing so can be challenging. If the children are receiving remittances from their father, they may feel that they can do as they please. Still, Manuela added, some sons do follow their grandfather or uncles' trade. In short, my interview data indicated that by leaving their wives and children to find work abroad, men who emigrate ostensibly to better their families' lives often create circumstances that lead to incomplete educations for their children, early pregnancies for their daughters, and a greater likelihood that their sons may get involved in criminal activity.

Manuela stated that when a couple's decision for the husband to migrate is mutual, he tends to maintain communication with his family in Guatemala more so than husbands who decide independently. Anastasia had mentioned that if a husband is not sending money, he stops calling the family. These emigrant widows who end up abandoned by their spouse get bitter, according to Manuela, especially if they are not Christians, because they are angry with God. If they are Christian—and she clarified that this includes Roman Catholic, Protestant, and evangelical—they tend to feel sad but accept the situation, finding happiness in their children and helping them find work after graduation. If the husband was abusive, the family is better off after he leaves, although the wife must adapt and learn to survive. It is important to note that Manuela is part of a

family of Christians whose faith is important to them, and although the organization they work with is not Christian, it has strong ties to the Christian community.

The stories of Juana and Ester exemplify the gradual abandonment the social workers discussed, but their children have not reacted in the worst-case scenario described by Manuela. Juana maintained that her husband, gone for four years at the time of the interview, has no plans to return. A year and a half after leaving, he wanted her to join him in the U.S., but she refused because "I have to be father and mother to the children," she told me (interview with author July 2020). As related above, Juana said that her husband began drinking two years after he left, and not only does he no longer send money, but he no longer calls. Although she works despite never imagining that she would have to, she nonetheless expressed joy that she has her children, and that she can help them. Yet, her husband's absence is difficult for the children, she affirmed. When he used to call, he only scolded them, so eventually they quit listening to him. Now, they listen to her and are grateful for her, even worrying about her when pandemic started.

Ester recounted a similar experience. Her partner decided on his own to emigrate; it was not a mutual decision, she recounted. He has been in the U.S. for seven years, and he has had another woman for a year or so, with whom he lives. It is unclear how she knows this since she said that he denied it when she asked him about it. Nonetheless, convinced that it is true, she began making her own decisions. Due to her father-in-law's verbal abuse of her and children, she chose to move the family in with her parents. Ester's youngest child does not know his own father, who left before he was born. The oldest child has two pictures of his father on his phone from social media, and he does know his father, but the middle two barely do. Now, Ester's partner rarely calls her or the

children, although at first, he would call the children. This neglect makes the children sad, she asserted. Sometimes she gives them money to call him, and they ask when he is coming. They tell him, “We miss you. You’re not with my mom,” and he says, “I’ll be back next year, and I’ll buy you something when I do” (interview with author August 2020). Ester said that she doubts that he will come back, and if so, he will return to his parents, not to her and the children. He acts, she explained, as if he has no children.

Amalia’s and Eva’s husbands have been gone slightly less time than Juana’s and Ester’s, and they consistently stay in touch with their families. Desperation and resignation stood out in Amalia’s narrative despite what she described as her husband’s continued close relationship to the family during the two years since he left. She wept several times during our interview. She told me that although her husband has no plans to return because of their daughter’s illness, he calls two or three times a week to talk to his daughter. Amalia opined that the children miss their father, but their behavior has not changed with their friends, and they still obey her. Two weeks after our interview, Jocelyn told me that Amalia’s daughter had died (personal communication August 2020). Eva, whose husband left three years ago and has no plans to return, also cried when talking about her family. Nonetheless, she maintained that she and her husband have always communicated well, and that has not changed. As with Amalia, Eva’s husband calls two to three times a week to talk to her and their children. The children miss him but understand that he had to go. Regarding family relations, she said that her parents-in-law do not spend as much time with her now because they have another daughter-in-law and because her husband left.

Liliana and Marlene both stated that their husbands had left in early 2020 and still maintain regular contact. Liliana said her husband calls once or twice a week, and Marlene said she hears from her husband three times a week. Liliana and her husband tell each other everything, discussing what each other is up to. Although he is *not* the children's father, he loves them as own, and when he calls, he asks about them and talks to them if they are giving her trouble. Liliana affirmed that while she does make more family decisions with her husband gone, she still consults him for some things, e.g., if one of the children wants to go out somewhere too far from the house. Marlene asserted that her relationship with her husband, who plans to come back in four or five years, has not changed. They talk about the children and how he is doing, but, she conceded, she does make more decisions. Also, she now talks less with her parents-in-law.

Graciela's relationship with her husband had already disintegrated before he emigrated with another woman two and a half years before I spoke with her. However, he does call the children on weekends, and she lets them talk to him, since "our problems have nothing to do with them" (interview with author August 2020). He told Graciela that he will come back. At first, she said, her younger children were sad and asked if she made him leave; but the oldest was unaffected. Also, she initially had trouble getting them to obey her. Now, however, they are not as sad, and they obey her better. She maintains a cordial but distant relationship with her in-laws, making sure that her children greet them.

V. Trends and Experiences: Material and Social Support for Emigrant Widows

Guatemala—Support and assistance from the government or civil society exists but is not widely available or effective. Again, Jocelyn noted that the difference in culture

and language between much of the rural population, especially women, and the Guatemalan business and public sector can make emigrant widows too fearful to seek appropriate healthcare or report crimes. However, Jocelyn noted that in her region, banks and other businesses often have bilingual personnel who speak the local Mayan language and who can assist people unable to read. Jocelyn herself works in multiple departments as a gender adviser for an organization that addresses healthcare problems for women with infants in areas with the least access to the outside world. Regarding emigrant widows, Anastasia also stated that no organization or government program in Guatemala really helps. Manuela remarked that the government often does not even know what is happening, particularly in remote areas, and she does not know of any government programs that could assist them. Yet, she said that the organization for which she and Anastasia work teaches these women in villages in two departments how to have self-worth through learning about the Bible and by teaching them skills in handcrafts that they can use to earn money. They start, Manuela said, by listening to them. In the context of the hardships that these women endure, as described by Manuela, this suggests that despite cultural norms and expectations regarding gender roles and emigration, emigrant widows do not agree with all aspects of their situations.

Most of the women seem to have a means of social support in place, and two of them, Juana and Marlene, receive some material assistance from family members. After her in-laws mortgaged her home to pay her husband's debt, Juana's family gave her a place to live, she related, and they also help her sometimes with the children and expenses. While the evangelical church she attends teaches that a woman's place is in the home, she affirmed that her congregation does not look down on her even though she

now must work. The pastor, she added, encourages her. However, she receives no financial assistance from the church. Eva also spoke of social support from her evangelical church and her own family. She and her family visit each other, and before COVID-19, church members would come pray for her. Similarly, Liliana asserted that she does get to socialize with her aunts and siblings, although not as often as prior to the pandemic. Financially, though, she said that she receives no financial assistance from any person or organization. Graciela explained that although she lives away from her own family, her father and siblings live in nearby communities in the region. They visit each other once or twice a week, and she discusses her life and problems with her oldest sister. Graciela also acknowledged receiving emotional support from a nearby Roman Catholic church, which I will expand on in a later subsection. She did not mention whether she receives any material support from anyone outside her nuclear family. Marlene, who had mentioned that she lives with her mother, affirmed that while she and her mother help each other, no one else helps the family financially. Socially, she also has support from her mother, with whom she discusses her fears and problems and who gives her advice. Ester has lived near her parents since her estrangement from her husband after he emigrated. For social support, she recounted that she has her father to talk to about her life and problems. However, she stated that she gets no financial help from her family, who are poor, or from anyone else, even though she has lots of needs. Amalia described having social support from her family and church. She said that she can talk about life and her problems with her aunt, uncle, and sisters-in-law, and before the pandemic, women from the Roman Catholic church that she attends would come and pray for her daughter.

Tajikistan—Tajikistani emigrant widows still face many structural obstacles to greater socioeconomic security, according to all of the interviewees, especially in non-urban regions. Still, Berina asserted that from a governmental standpoint, the Soviet legacy of progressive rights for women has not deteriorated. Additionally, women who suffer physical or psychological violence from their husbands or mothers-in-law now get divorced much more frequently than they did twenty years ago, she observed, noting that psychological violence includes women being confined to their house. She emphasized that NGOs have done a lot of good, including collaborating with the government to help divorced women earn money. They do so by teaching women skills in traditional crafts such as weaving; this approach, along with widespread poverty, precludes resistance from Tajikistani society to the notion of women working.

Indeed, most of the social workers and all of the emigrant widows with whom I spoke are associated as either employees or participants in a project that helps women in this way. One of them, Laleh detailed how her organization helps women, especially emigrant widows, to start a small business. They provide training, first seeking women who some resources of their own and/or some courage. Then, she stated, the women can diversify their business and employ other women. Nonetheless, Laleh highlighted that the process is hard. Obstacles include women's fear and lack of education. Many women in the project are widows, she explained, and they do not answer to a husband or in-laws; non-widows often say that their husbands or in-laws will not let them do it.

Mahtob expressed a need for more financial and social support, although she has some of each. She said that besides the little bit of financial support she receives from her husband and his family, she received support for her own two older brothers until they

passed away in 2019. Mahtob noted that her sister also helps her; although her sister does not work, her sister's husband has a good job in Russia. Also, she remarked, if something happened to her husband, she could find work as a kindergarten teacher again. Socially, besides wanting a closer relationship with her husband, she mentioned missing her late brothers. However, she and her sister, who lives in another region, stay in touch. They talk every day by phone, and they visit each other a couple of times a month, she said.

Aryana did not discuss any material or social support she currently has outside of her husband and children. As mentioned elsewhere, after becoming a Christian, Aryana received some economic assistance from fellow believers in the form of jobs babysitting and teaching Sunday school. She also expressed how life in general changed for the better once she and her husband became Christians. She did not indicate, however, whether she continues to receive material or social support from her Christian associates.

Afsaneh stated that her life is good, not hard. She recalled that she used to share her problems with her mother before her mother passed away. She misses her husband and her mother, she told me, and now has no one in her life with whom to discuss her fears and worries. Yet, while she said that she does not want to another confidante since no one nowadays can be trusted, as previously discussed, she asserted that she would want to go out and socialize if she could, but her parents-in-law will not let her.

Niloufar found a different type of support system. As mentioned above, she discussed that life was so hard growing up without her father that she attempted suicide three times. However, as she recounted how she eventually graduated from college, married, and became a successful businesswoman and entrepreneur, she mentioned several times that God and her faith helped her through all of this. I asked her for more

details. She told me that she had been drawn to a warm, loving woman in her village who turned out to be a Christian. Niloufar said she thought, "I want to trust [her] God," and she became a Christian. She prayed for an opportunity to study. One came, although it was not her first choice of university, and unlike many of her friends, she had to work while she studied. Likewise, friends who started businesses had rich relatives to help, but she did not. She said that an inner voice—her faith—kept encouraging her: "My faith, it always said to me, 'Yes, you might not have reached that, you might not have some rich relatives, but you have your God.'"

VI. Conclusion

Afflicted by poverty and/or joblessness, many Guatemalan and Tajikistani men fight to survive and to get ahead, yet culturally they are cast as the main breadwinners and decision makers of the family. By comparison, their wives, raised mainly to oversee domestic concerns, often have educational and social disadvantages: families do not prioritize schooling expenses for girls, a situation possibly compounded in Tajikistan by corruption and in Guatemala by low accessibility, and once married, women may not leave the home without permission. For rural women in Guatemala, and for most women in Tajikistan regardless of the community they live in, this limited freedom becomes even more restricted once their husband emigrates.

CHAPTER 6

Analysis

> *I am a woman only as long as I have my husband and I have children. Otherwise, I am not a woman.*
>
> – Jocelyn, *Interview with author, August 2020*

This chapter provides an analysis of the interview data collected, summarizing the current situation of women in both Tajikistan and Guatemala. First, I provide analysis for the chapters on crime, violence, corruption, and the economy in both countries before comparing and contrasting the two. Then, I summarize, compare, and contrast a) how the two countries have disadvantaged women socioeconomically, and b) the situations of emigrant widows in each country. Lastly, I look at women's agency and empowerment in the two settings. I start by a) noting prerogatives or freedoms afforded women in interviewees' cultures and/or socioeconomic situations as well as examples of agency that emigrant widows have related in their stories, sometimes as a result of the absence of their husband/significant other, and b) describing individual transcendence of historical/cultural conventions in the two countries.

I. Crime, Violence, Corruption, and Economy

A. Tajikistan

Statistically, Tajikistan appears to have low rates of crime and violence. However, international organizational studies, academic research, and the current study strongly indicate that the reality is otherwise. If this is so, why the paradox? While this study has covered a variety of topics related to crime and violence in the country, one fundamental reason at the governmental level seems to be the unwillingness of politicians and officials

to address many of these problems for one of three motives: 1) their own involvement in crimes such as drug smuggling or money laundering; 2) other benefits they gain from criminal activity, like bribes or consolidation of power; or 3) a reluctance to alienate their constituency by interfering with their constituency's cultural values and traditions. Cultural values and traditions also play leading roles at the societal level. Strong kinship allegiances prevent family members from reporting crime committed by relatives and hide violence, especially interfamily violence. At the same time, adherence to traditional family loyalties and a jaundiced view of government, likely aggravated by the perception that the politically well-connected profit from illicit activity while long-standing, endemic economic woes remain unresolved, cause many Tajikistanis to disregard laws regulating social matters such as marriage, education, and domestic violence, the prevalence of which subject matter experts I interviewed and numerous studies unanimously affirm.

The reality of endemic economic woes, exemplified by an inauspicious job market, nonetheless means that international labor migration has become a reality for many Tajikistani families. Yasmina, the interpreter, and several interviewees noted the low salaries of government workers. The six social workers and emigrant widows I interviewed unanimously remarked on the struggle to survive that many Tajikistanis face, Dilruba and Niloufar underscoring that even university graduates struggle to find adequately paying jobs in the country. That Afsaneh's husband, a graduate of a foreign military academy, could not find suitable work in the country, and that Aryana's oldest son, a university graduate, does not make enough money to support the family bear this claim out. Aleah alluded to the weak labor market when she mentioned that there were no

jobs for Tajikistani workers whose regular seasonal travel to Russia was prevented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Do the financial difficulties many Tajikistanis face stem from absolute poverty or relative poverty resulting from prevalent cultural expectations? Mahtob indicated that her husband's financial need to emigrate resulted from his decision to have two wives, which is illegal. Likewise, Yasmina and some of the social workers discussed the cost of a traditional wedding as a financial need that in many families elicits labor migration for one or more of the male members. Still, Aryana asserted that even without her sons' weddings, regular living expenses necessitate her husband working in Russia. Mahtob repeatedly mentioned that, aside from her husband sending money to expand her living quarters, most of his remittances support his first wife's family, lending credence to social worker Laleh's observation that second wives often must find ways to support themselves. This implication that men's remittances do little more than support their first wife and family may discredit the notion that polygamy alone necessitates emigration. Laleh also described the farming life of village men, most of whom do not even have a full secondary school education, as subsistence level—insufficient to provide more than food for a day. Subjective or not, obstacles to financial health have nonetheless led to an "emigration culture" in which labor migration has become a rite of passage along the route to most families' survival.

B. Guatemala

Although not as low as Tajikistan's, Guatemala has statistically low-to-average rates of most categories of crime—except for homicide. Yet, studies often contradict each other on the roles of factors underlying violence in Guatemala. For example, Chapter 3

discussed the possible contributing factors of poverty and inequality, but while economic and social marginalization undoubtedly play a part, other countries with widespread poverty and inequality do not have such high levels of violence (Prado:239). Moreover, while a 2010 case study by the Strategic Studies Institute at the U.S. Army War College echoed other sources by blaming the chaos in Guatemala on three criminal actors—international narcotraffickers, the clandestine networks of corrupt businessmen and government officials, and the maras (Brands 2010:13-28)—another study could not tie a significant amount of the homicides it looked at to criminal organizations (Dudley:5). There is the further assertion by some that violence has become normalized or acceptable in Guatemalan society (Handy:302, Reséndiz:14, Prado:215). Denis Roberto Martinez disputed this notion, writing that his fieldwork "did not find evidence of a 'culture of violence' in Guatemala. Guatemalans are not aggressive, nor do they teach their children to be violent . . . nor do they become desensitized to it . . . . [They] oppose violence, but they feel powerless and unprotected . . ." (2014:236). Nonetheless, my own fieldwork for this study points to widespread interfamily violence and a trend of communal violence in the form of vigilante justice.

Why the lack of consensus? A lack of complete, accurate data no doubt contributes to ongoing violence by family members, communities, and criminal elements. Apart from the widespread corruption that discourages citizens from reporting crimes to Guatemalan government agencies, these agencies are inefficient and do not always have adequate means to gather and compile data (Matute 12-13, Dudley:49, 53). Likewise, the prevalence of violence itself makes it difficult, if not dangerous, to investigate its roots (Handy:312). In fact, Manuela had noted the danger to law enforcement officials that try

to get involved in community vigilantism. At the same time, corruption, almost universally blamed for Guatemala's ills, does not easily lend itself to quantification (Brands:29).

Still, while ties of Guatemala's high unemployment and poverty rates to its crime and violence may remain up for debate, a recurring theme both among key informants and subject matter experts was the clear connection between these economic woes and migration. Two interviewees expressed a contravening viewpoint: Juana, an emigrant widow, and Manuela, a social worker, indicated that dissatisfaction, rather than need, pushes people to migrate. However, both women made other statements supportive of financial need as a push factor for emigration. Yet, Manuela's observation that men in rural areas often emigrate when they see the houses built by neighbors who have emigrated merits closer inspection. When I had asked Jocelyn about the larger houses I noted in the town where she lived, she said that, aside from the "coyotes" and some people who do well in business, many of those houses belong to people who had gone to the United States. I noted that this response would seem to reinforce the idea that the best way to get ahead financially is to emigrate, and she agreed. As in Tajikistan, to address families' perceived financial needs, a ritual of emigration has evolved in Guatemala.

C. Conclusion

Official data do not disclose the extent of lawlessness within the borders of these two countries, thoroughfares for illicit drugs with endemic corruption, joblessness, and domestic violence, that routinely send thousands of workers to seek the financial security for their families abroad that they do not find at home. Further, despite the widely

acknowledged existence or even magnitude of some forms of illegal and/or violent activity, it persists despite measures to address it.

Conclusive answers remain elusive as to why Guatemala's violence has intensified in the decades following the peaceful conclusion of its civil war. Researchers and governmental agencies, both Guatemalan and international, point out many likely or possible causes. Without solid evidence, however, no one can say for sure. This fact alone doubtless contributes to the problem; to change the course of a phenomenon without an accurate understanding of its roots poses a dilemma. Yet, until the "culture of silence" described by Jocelyn no longer holds sway, not only the violence engulfing Guatemala—whether among family members, against strangers by frenzied citizens with an inflamed sense of justice, or by criminal elements—but widespread corruption, large-scale drug trafficking, and other unlawful behavior will remain in the shadows.

Similarly, in Tajikistan much crime and violence goes unreported or underreported, according to my field work and research by international organizations and scholars. As noted above, family loyalties and lack of faith in the government and legal system contribute. To expand on this, Tajikistanis I interviewed from a variety of socioeconomic and educational levels repeatedly expressed or demonstrated reluctance to discuss matters such as terrorism, drug trafficking, corruption/misconduct by law enforcement, and, in Afsaneh's case, personal knowledge of instances of domestic violence. This hesitation connotes a climate of distrust and fear that may implicate not only the government, but other citizens as well—perhaps even acquaintances or family members.

A parallel climate of wariness and fear lies implicit in the unwillingness of Guatemalan contacts to speak of or allow me to ask questions on the same or related topics. Nonetheless, variance in responses by the two countries' interviewees may indicate nuanced differences in each country's atmosphere of distrust. For example, several Tajikistanis remarked on proactive, effective measures taken by their government to fight crime and/or address women's issues, while Guatemalans made few statements relating government to those topics, positive or negative. Exceptions to the latter included the two Guatemalan social workers, who conceded that the government, working with NGOs, had helped women. Manuela noted improvements in girls' education while Anastasia observed the increasing egalitarianism of male and female roles in marriage. On crime, however, Manuela implicated government ineffectiveness when she discussed law enforcement's inability to intervene in lynchings, and Jocelyn pointed out law enforcement's corruption as an obstacle to women reporting domestic violence. In contrast, Berina, Farhad, and Aryana discussed laws that penalize domestic violence and/or that keep children from exposure to conservative Islamic teachings that might lead to oppression of women and terrorism. Farhad also asserted that women's rights benefited from the fact that the pro-democracy party, not the Islamification party, had won the civil war. Berina alluded to this outcome when I asked her about the government's position on women's rights, stating that the country's Soviet legacy and secular way of life have prevented the deterioration of women's rights. Yet, Berina immediately called my attention to the good work of NGOs in the country, and she had noted that as the government has reported progress on CEDAW's implementation, women's groups in Tajikistan came together to "offer a different perspective," from

which I infer a lack in government efforts to enfranchise women that needed filling. This, in conjunction with Aleah's statement that women's issues are relegated by officials to checklist items, suggests that efforts towards improving Tajikistani women's rights suffer from government indifference or ineptitude, an inference with which relevant literature agrees.

Nevertheless, at a law enforcement level, a majority of emigrant widows in both countries, including one social worker in Tajikistan (Dilruba, also an emigrant widow) said that they would trust the police to help them if they reported a crime. One of these positive respondents, Juana (Guatemala), did give the caveat that women may be afraid to report a crime because it can take the police several days to address it, and meanwhile, women cannot leave the house. We had just discussed domestic violence, and I believe she was referring to that. For the same reason—perceived law enforcement inefficiency—Marlene (Guatemala) said she would *not* trust the police if she needed to report a crime.

In Tajikistan, Aryana was the only emigrant widow to express distrust of the police if she were victim of a crime, not due to their inefficiency but because they are underpaid and will side with whomever offers the biggest bribe. The two Tajikistani emigrant widows who expressed confidence in law enforcement were Mahtob and Afsaneh. Mahtob had a positive experience with the police during her marriage to her abusive first husband, but, as discussed in Chapter 2, other factors, including corruption, could potentially have led to a positive outcome for her without her knowledge. Aryana, however, who believes law enforcement is corrupt, has two sons working for the government. One has a university degree but is underpaid, while the other son, who was

forced into the military suffers mistreatment, does not receive adequate provisions, and gets paid nothing. While neither of her sons works in law enforcement, she may view any government job as low paying. Afsaneh, who expressed trust in the police, nonetheless stated that her husband, whose education was paid for by the Tajikistani government, earned so little in the five years he worked for the country's military, that he eventually emigrated. Afsaneh is also significantly younger than the other emigrant widows and was the only one not to attend university. Dilruba, both a social worker and an emigrant widow, had worked for the government herself, and she noted that such jobs do not afford a living wage; men must work other jobs. In other words, Aryana has the longest and most complete experience with government jobs of the three. I will further discuss Tajikistani's view of government jobs and the economy below.

In Guatemala, a pattern nonetheless emerged from my fieldwork: the tendency is for those on lower socioeconomic levels to view political power and wealth as synonymous. Thus, when the lines between government and organized crime blur, it exacerbates citizens' view—that the government does not protect or administrate the common good. Rather, it is ineffective in providing security, looking out for the public welfare, and upholding justice. Taking matters into one's own hands for one's wellbeing may therefore seem not only justified, but necessary, whether through crime, violence, or emigration. While seeking political office or a governmental position is one of several ways to escape poverty, an alternative route may be through criminal enterprise (although political power and crime may overlap). Domestic violence, in some ways a cultural norm itself, enforces traditional gender norms (and possibly expresses frustration at a hopeless situation), flouting laws against it. Communal violence similarly enforces

cultural norms while holding official law enforcement at bay, and criminal violence directly or indirectly advances the financial goals of organized crime. Finally, emigration serves as an escape both from poverty and from violence, whether widespread or within the family.

In Tajikistan, my fieldwork yielded similar evidence of the corruption, large-scale drug trafficking, and culture of social acceptance or even expectation of violence towards women reported in relevant literature. A strong overlap between the country's government and organized crime intensifies a deep-seated mistrust of government and law left over from Soviet rule. This pessimism combines with the region's strong culture of family loyalty to help keep these phenomena from official reports. Meanwhile corruption and poverty feed each other: inadequate income for government workers, bureaucratic, military, or otherwise, make them susceptible to corruption.

Corruption, in its turn, can exacerbate the poverty of the average citizen while enriching those who are better connected politically. No Tajikistani interviewee connected corruption to poverty as expressly as Jocelyn, who had asserted that Guatemala has great legislation and programs to aid the poor, but very little of it reaches the target demographic since, as money allocated by the central government passes through each ministry or lower level of government, politicians divert the money to their own pocketbooks or to reward their family members and supporters. Yet, Laleh and Aryana each briefly discussed bureaucratic exploitation of poor families in different ways. Additionally, the theme of inadequate pay of government jobs recurred – Aryana and Mahtob noted underpaid family members, as mentioned above. Dilruba, who had worked for the government, said that even blue-collar jobs in Russia paid better, and that

men with a government job in Tajikistan must find additional work to support their families. Yasmina likewise stated that because of the low salary, her parents did not want her to work for the government, and while Niloufar did not explicitly discuss government jobs, she said that the only jobs that paid enough in the country are with NGOs. If these statements accurately reflect reality, and corruption is little stigmatized, vulnerability among government officials to bribery and other types of corruption in Tajikistan could conceivably rival those of Guatemala. For the average Tajikistani, however, without an income adequate to provide for families' needs, including traditional social expenses, and few avenues in their country outside of crime, corruption and political connections, labor migration presents one of the better options.

II. Women – Repression and Consequences

A. Structural Repression

They arrived at this repression by slightly different routes, although some contributing factors are comparable. Even though Guatemala gained its independence over a century before Tajikistan, the colonizers' legacy of disenfranchisement of its indigenous population and women has continued, as have differences in culture and lifestyle between indigenous and Ladino (of European heritage) populations. Thus, centuries of living in subjugation and imbibing principles regarding women's identity from the conquistadores' culture have inhibited progress for women in Guatemala. In Tajikistan, the difference seems less ethnic and more ideological. The government (as mentioned in Chapter II, mainly a continuation of the Tajikistani Communist Party under the Soviets) is attempting to push some progressive measures and ensure an educated,

more secular populace of men and women, but many Tajikistanis resist by ignoring legislation on what they consider family and religious matters.

Both countries faced civil wars and transition periods of peace in which international organizations helped shape new laws and programs, including some progressive rights for women. Yet, the civil war in Guatemala lasted decades, with violence against women used as a weapon of war. Tajikistan's civil war lasted only a few years and, while it was certainly violent, I did not find any mention in academic literature of widespread violence being specifically directed at women as a tool against enemy populations. From a political standpoint, Guatemala's armed conflict did not open the door to more female participation, unlike in other parts of Latin America. In fact, the conflict allowed both sides to avoid addressing women's rights in general. The civil war in Tajikistan, combined with its new independence from Moscow, had a similar effect, if for slightly different reasons: reassertion of national cultural identity and a devastated economy. Still, conservative views of religion played a part in both areas: Roman Catholicism in Guatemala, Islam in Tajikistan.

During the peace processes in both countries and afterwards, women's groups have used the transition periods to further progress. Support for this movement in Tajikistan came from international organizations, while advancement came in part from the well-paying jobs at foreign NGOs that exposed Tajikistanis to progressive ideas. In Guatemala, however, progressive feminist values came from women returning from exile who worked alongside indigenous women's groups. Passage of legislation addressing violence against women has resulted in both countries, but legal loopholes for perpetrators remain. Guatemalan legislation has remedied this situation to an extent, at

least on paper; whether Tajikistan will follow suit remains to be seen. Differing interests among women's groups in each country has, at times, impeded headway, but in Tajikistan, I heard and saw more evidence of a unified front. A similar unification process may be underway in Guatemala as well, but evidence of whether it has or has not did not turn up in my research or fieldwork.

Implementation of *de jure* progress in the decades following the adoption of. Peace Accords in the two countries has proved challenging. Subject matter experts in both countries (Jocelyn, Manuela, Berina, and Aleah) attested to the validity of assertions of academic sources that lack of resources, government apathy, and embedded traditions with elements at times tied to conservative religious views have hindered gains. Relevant literature (Roche and Hohmann 2013:134; Turkhanova 2013:138-141, 143; Harris 2013:122; Direnberger 2019:46-47, 52; Swerdlow 2019) and at least one subject matter expert in Tajikistan (personal communication with author, beta study October 2019) question the sincerity of the government's commitment to enfranchising women, and some laws mentioned in this chapter seem motivated more by politicians' desire to stay in power than by genuine concern for their constituency. Still, some positive changes have occurred in the Central Asian country; at least in urban areas, women on the streets face less discrimination for secular dress, and whether domestic violence has in fact declined or not, it appears to have become less openly acceptable. Nonetheless, the lack of social acceptance of domestic violence does not necessarily correspond to low occurrence, as the "culture of silence" that Jocelyn described in Guatemala demonstrates. In fact, intrafamily violence remains widespread in both places and in Guatemala, other types of violence against women as well. Additionally, political office remains out of reach of

many Tajikistani and Guatemalan women despite official mechanisms that would allow them to serve. While my research found similar obstacles to progressive women's rights in both countries, including regression to patriarchal tradition and less prioritization of female education, scholars and subject matter experts on Guatemala also emphasized language barriers.

While Tajikistan seems to have made greater strides in educating its women, Manuela and Anastasia's statements reflected recent progress in Guatemala. Still, interviewees in both countries emphasized that, overall, women continue to face greater educational disadvantages than men, which often result economic dependency on their husbands, in-laws, or their families of origin. Women in both countries do earn money in jobs outside the home, but married women in rural areas mostly are expected not to, although in Tajikistan they may sew or do farm work, and in Guatemala, interviewees discussed selling some of their farm animals to earn money. Lack of education has also limited some older rural Guatemalan women linguistically. Not only does it further diminish their employability, but it creates a language barrier that may prevent them from addressing their family's healthcare needs or reporting crimes, even if they are the victim.

My fieldwork in Tajikistan did not uncover a similar linguistic divide. However, social norms in Tajikistan create a similar handicap for women, particularly in rural areas, who may not independently make decisions about their children's needs or interact with government officials. A similar tradition exists in Guatemala, although interviewees described more variation in cultural mores. In Tajikistan, education levels for the entire population, including women, seem to be higher as well (although my sample in Tajikistan did not include rural women, who could have as low an education level as my

Guatemalan sample, according to two Tajikistani social workers). Religion, however, seems to play a stronger role there, with multiple interviewees and scholars noting increased Islamization in Tajikistan influencing trends towards more conservative dress and other social aspects for women. Women are also disenfranchised religiously in Tajikistan, with women often not allowed to learn about their religion in public services or from anyone other than their husband.

Girls continue to face heavy social pressure to marry young in both countries, and marriages may be official or unofficial. In Guatemala, the latter type of union is more of a "living together" arrangement, whereas in Tajikistan, it translates to having only a religious ceremony without registering with the civil authorities. Yasmina the interpreter disclosed that some of her own schoolmates were married off extralegally below the legal age because their families were poor, some even as illegal second wives. Girls in Tajikistan have less choice about whom they marry, although in some situations—depending on family dynamics or if a girl gets pregnant—Guatemalan girls, especially in rural areas, may be pressured by families to marry a boyfriend.

In both countries, married women often may not leave their house if their husband not in the area. If he is there, they may go out but only with his permission or that of his mother. In Guatemala, several of the women mentioned having worked prior to marrying or having children; in Tajikistan, no one specifically addressed the topic. Manuela and Graciela said rural married couples in Guatemala can vary in how they handle household decisions and having jobs, but in general, interviewees indicated that cultural norms preclude married women working. In contrast, in Tajikistan, several of the women worked outside the home while married, but other than farm labor in neighbor's fields, as

in Guatemala, they seemed to be confined by social constraints to their home in their husband's absence. This seemed to be the case in both rural and urban settings. Additionally, while Tajikistani (first) wives are viewed specifically as household servants, an analogous concept of married women did not surface in my Guatemalan research. However, women in both countries may become an unofficial "second" wife, despite both countries' laws prohibiting polygamy. In Guatemala, again, such occurrences translate into an informal arrangement while in Tajikistan, religious ceremonies mark the union.

Women often do not have any control of family finances or decision-making power regarding their children and household in Tajikistan, and many women in Guatemala face similar circumstances. In these situations, husbands and/or in-laws have these responsibilities. This dynamic applies more universally in Tajikistan; in Guatemala, it may not apply, or it may apply to a lesser extent in some situations. Besides education, socialization seems to hinder rural women's occupational opportunities in both countries. Leaving the home without the permission of a husband or mother-in-law is frowned on in both countries' rural areas and even in urban regions of Tajikistan. Social workers in both countries highlighted that families, especially away from cities, raise girls to become housewives and emphasize learning domestic skills in their upbringing.

B. Portrait of the Emigrant Widow

Emigrant widows in Tajikistan and Guatemala undergo significant hardships financially, emotionally, or both, as women whose social standing is determined by marriage status, whose livelihood heavily depends on a husband's income, and whose culture and education have not prepared to be independent. In Guatemala, women seem

to struggle more to survive without their husbands present. This difficulty may owe to Guatemala's higher rates of poverty, its greater variation in cultural views on women living on their own, women's lower educational levels, and/or the stronger trend of Guatemalan migrant laborers to completely abandon their families after several years in the receiving country. However, in Tajikistan, Aryana's family has struggled as well, and Mahtob discussed financial strain. Still, both women are college educated, and, as Mahtob said, she could find a professional job if something happened to her husband. Only two of the emigrant widows in either country work, but in Guatemala, Juana's husband completely abandoned his family, and Ester's husband sends money inconsistently. Also, Ester believes her husband is with another woman in the United States. Even Graciela receives some money from her ex-husband for her children and does not work outside the home. The husbands of the four other Guatemalan emigrant widows had been gone less than four years, the point at which Jocelyn said that migrant husbands often begin to abandon their families. In Tajikistan, none of the emigrant widows work, although Aryana has during periods when her husband migrated annually. Overall, my key informants in both countries seemed unlikely to work outside the home with their husbands gone while their husbands maintain a relationship with them, or in Graciela's case, with her children. Table 6.1 compares some basic data about my sample size in each country. On average, Guatemalan emigrant widows were two years younger than their Tajikistani counterparts but had twice as many children. However, the mean age of emigrant widows' children in Tajikistan was two years older. This seems to indicate that while Guatemalan and Tajikistani women began having children at around the same age, Guatemalan women have more children, on average.

Table 6.1*: Comparison of Sample Demographics

	Mean Age		Median # Children		Mean Child Age	
	Guatemala:	***Tajikistan:***	***Guatemala:***	***Tajikistan:***	***Guatemala:***	***Tajikistan:***
	41.5	38.5	4	2	14.5	14.5
Adjusted†	41.5	43.5	4	2	16.5	19.5

** All numbers rounded to nearest whole. Means are of an age range that resulted from calculating means of the higher limits and of the lower limits of all age ranges for a country.*

†*Compared to fellow interviewees, one woman per country is younger and/or has either fewer, relatively younger or no children. Adjusted averages calculated without their data are shown.*

A few factors that may contribute to the differences in Guatemalan and Tajikistani emigrant widows' situations, including differences in average number of children, are briefly summarized in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Comparison of Social Views on Family Matters

	Tajikistan	Guatemala
Abortion:	Officially illegal unless mother's health compromised BUT considered acceptable by rural Muslim women until the fourth month of pregnancy	Abortion illegal
Birth Control:	Village men & society consider any form a sin, even condoms; however, some women use an IUD, pills, or form of birth control without letting their husbands know. Urban society is more accepting of most forms.	Still much religious resistance to birth control in rural areas– "it's killing a baby" (Jocelyn, interview with author August 2020)
Dowry:	Still widely practiced in villages/rural areas	Practiced in some villages/rural areas
Wife under Parents-in-law's control/influence:	Much more universally, especially in village/rural areas	Happens in some villages/rural areas, but more apparent variety in wives' living situations than in Tajikistan

Wives in both countries may lose financial support if their husbands/significant others in the destination countries marry or start a family with another woman there, although this situation applies more to second and third Tajikistani wives than to first wives. None of my Guatemalan interviewees addressed whether men with multiple wives

tend to emigrate, and if so, how this might affect the second wife. Still, given that Guatemalan men who emigrate tend to stay for longer periods and their stint abroad lasts on average longer than that of Tajikistani men, Guatemalan emigrant widows run more risk of losing financial support from their absent domestic partners than do Tajikistani first wives. Additionally, the illegal status of Central American emigrants in Mexico and the United States means they incur a significant debt to their "coyotes," which affects how soon they can begin remitting to their families. Still, while their Central Asian counterparts emigrate legally to work abroad, Tajikistani migrant laborers can face a similar situation in the time it takes to register and find a job. Also, if a Tajikistani husband does not send enough money regularly to his family, even his first wife and her children with him may lose their home.

Guatemalan emigrant widows appeared to have more autonomy and agency in some cases once their husband leaves than their Tajikistani counterparts, but there were two factors that may influence this: 1) none of the Guatemalan emigrant widows with whom I spoke live with their in-laws, and 2) three of the seven Guatemalans have been socially and/or materially abandoned or semi-abandoned by their significant other. In contrast, other than Dilruba, who divorced her husband after he married a woman in Russia, Tajikistani emigrant widows with whom I spoke continue to have a relationship with their husbands. In Afsaneh's case, she lives with her in-laws, as well. Still, with their domestic partners absent, emigrant wives in both countries often have limited agency in taking care of their children's healthcare and other needs. Women's linguistic handicap in Guatemala does not have a correlation in Tajikistan, but in Tajikistan, women, especially

in rural areas, are similarly handicapped by the tradition of male family members being responsible for interacting with officials.

In both countries, emigrant widows with whom I spoke had some social and financial support available, mostly from family members. Several Guatemalans also mentioned emotional support from their churches. None of the Tajikistani interviewees explicitly mentioned social support from their religious communities, but two of the emigrant widows are Muslim and as women, are not allowed to attend mosque. The other two emigrant widows and Niloufar, the daughter of an emigrant widow, are Christians. While they spoke openly of their faith, and Aryana mentioned that following their conversion, she had more job opportunities and her husband treated her much better, none discussed any current socializing, prayer, or encouragement from fellow believers. However, I was told that, along with terrorism and drug trafficking, discussing interviewees' involvement in Christian activities could put them at significant risk.

Despite financial hardship, women in both countries showed a determination for their children to study. Children of at least four of the Guatemalan key informants have stayed in school despite their father's absence, and two of these are the ones whose fathers have been gone the longest (of the others, one has pre-school children, and another's interview was cut short due to technical problems). Two of them expressed a wish to have gotten more education. Of the four emigrant widows in Tajikistan (one former, three current), three emphasized the importance of higher education for their current or future daughters. The other, Aryana, has two grown sons, one of whom did earn a university degree.

In short, the same corruption that feeds crime and exacerbates poverty in both countries also slows progress in undoing systemic repression of women. Men who do not or cannot turn to crime or corruption to alleviate their poverty often feel pressured to emigrate to improve their families' lives by leaving their wives and children behind, but this decision often jeopardizes the welfare of their wives. With few employable skills and heavy social restrictions, women whose husbands leave the country can face significant obstacles to physical and emotional well-being. In fact, for a variety of reasons, emigrant widows seem to experience negative emotions due to the distance between them and their significant other, and/or the related financial uncertainty. In Tajikistan, the increased direct influence of a woman's in-laws can add stress to her life. Still, two emigrant widows expressed happiness despite their difficulties—Juana and Dilruba. They are also the only two who no longer have any attachment to their husband—Dilruba divorced her husband after he married another woman, and Juana's husband "disappeared." They and other interviewees in both countries recounted instances of agency and empowerment. Thus, the same dynamics that further stresses a disadvantaged population may also lead to empowerment. I examine these and other examples of women's agency in the following section.

III. Agency and Empowerment

I did not include this section in my original thesis outline. However, as I listened to the stories of women in Tajikistan and Guatemala—their personal experiences, what they have witnessed, and what they have planned for their children—I began seeing signs of empowerment in the midst of hardship. Social workers in both countries are a testament to it. Dilruba trains housewives to have their own business. Before divorcing

her husband and getting a job, she resolved that her children would see a life different from the social, psychological, and financial abuse she suffered from her mother-in-law and her husband. Manuela teaches indigenous women the Bible and handcrafts to help them gain self-worth and learn to support themselves financially. She grew up in a Mayan village like many of her trainees, but her parents learned egalitarian principles from the NGO program for which she now works. Their and others' stories, some dramatic, others less so, yet all a record of enfranchisement if only in small ways, made the inclusion of this section essential.

A. Incidental Agency and/or Quality of Life

Despite systemic limitations on women's freedoms and protections, my investigation of emigrant widows' lives in Tajikistan and Guatemala uncovered some agency for women inherent in or resulting from the culture surrounding them, or, in some cases, from their domestic partners' emigration. In the former case, in both countries, once a woman has a married son, she often gains some rights and privileges. These include: 1) monitoring or exerting control over her daughter-in-law's behavior (especially in her son's absence); 2) administering her son's remittances, or, in Tajikistan, even the salary from his job; and 3) in Tajikistan, no longer having to do housework or prepare meals. Tajikistani mothers-in-law also have a stronger claim than their daughters-in-law to their sons' loyalties, according to Dilruba. Although no one in Guatemala explicitly made parallel statements, a similar paradigm seems to exist based on the following evidence disclosed in the interviews: 1) Guatemalan migrant workers may send their money to their mothers instead of their wives; 2) they rely on their mothers and other family members to monitor and report on their wives' behavior; and 3) they may take

financial steps in coordination with their parents but without their wives' knowledge. This experience happened in the case of Juana's husband, who also eventually cut her off socially and materially, as many emigrant men do to their wives.

Tajikistani men's preferential treatment of their mothers, Dilruba explained, stems from the tradition that a man must side with his mother against his wife, regardless of who is right or who tells the truth. Islam, she added, teaches respect for one's mother and gives her the right to "control everything." The only time Dilruba's former husband did defend her against his mother, his mother began crying and saying that wives are replaceable, but mothers are not. Religious tradition aside, a separate observation Dilruba made may also factor into mother-son relationships weighing more than marriage: when children see their mother suffer abuse as a *kelin* (daughter-in-law), not only do they help her with her work, but they feel sorry for her. One might reasonably expect that this protective feeling for their mother could carry into children's adulthood. Although my Guatemalan field work did not construct an equally detailed picture of mother-son relationships, the portrait of hardships suffered by emigrant widows that did emerge could conceivably elicit a similar strong, protective feeling from children. In fact, Juana noted that with her husband almost out of the picture, her children listen to her and obey her now instead of their father. They appreciate her not leaving them as he did and worry about her health.

Tajikistani mothers-in-law, however, seem to have these privileges more universally. While Guatemalan subject matter experts mentioned the privileges accorded mothers-in-law a handful of times, the term "mother-in-law" came up almost four times as often in Tajikistan interviews, from the perspectives of emigrant widows, not only

social workers and gender experts. Guatemalan interviewees also indicated a wider range of possible relationships between married couples and in-laws than those in Tajikistan. For example, Manuela noted that newlyweds in urban areas live separate from their families, and that some rural wives have freedom to come and go as they please without getting permission from their husband's mother. In Tajikistan, Laleh elaborated on the power a woman with married sons has, saying that if married daughters complain about their life of drudgery and abuse, their mothers make light of it by saying that it was hard for them, "but now I am . . . like a queen. I control everything" (interview with author August 2020). Likewise, Afsaneh explained that once a woman's son marries, she rests. Her husband no longer orders her around because her *kelin* does all the chores. None of my interviews in Guatemala elicited parallel observations.

Other examples of women's empowerment or relative well-being in a repressive culture surfaced in field work in both countries. Some financial or emotional empowerment interviewees discussed with me was a byproduct of their significant other's decision to emigrate, which I have noted in Table 6.3. The next subsection deals with clear signs or instances of attempts to influence change in women's socioeconomic status at individual and societal levels, but some statements by interviewees expressed agency but did not lend themselves to classification as deliberately or overtly counter-cultural or non-traditional. Since I could not determine whether these instances constituted part of a wider trend in society or an individual anomaly, I also elected to note them here in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Instances of Agency/Quality of Life Incidental to Culture or Labor Migration

	Tajikistan	Guatemala
Gender Expert:		Jocelyn – some women flee domestic violence by emigrating
Social Worker:	Niloufar – some women emigrate, leaving their children with their parents First wives less likely than second wives to be abandoned by husbands who start families in Russia. Laleh – Women in the livelihood project she coordinates are often widows who have no husband or in-laws controlling them. Second wives' relationships with their husbands are based more on romance than first wives (who are viewed as family slaves) Second wives also more often must look for work since the husband's remittances go to his parents, with whom his first wife lives with their children. Dilruba – some village women can earn money doing something like sewing from their home; many can earn produce by working in neighboring fields whether or not their husbands are present.	Manuela – sometimes an emigrant widow will take on decision making if the father is gone and no longer in communication Some emigrant widows start working even while their husbands are sending money, and they teach their children to work. They do not suffer as hard a blow if their husbands stop remitting to them. These women may have to work and have their children work secretly if their husbands have forbidden it since some husbands will stop sending if they find out. Anastasia – if an emigrant husband does not send money, his wife becomes responsible for the family. She must look for work.
Emigrant Widows:	Mahtob - fought with her current husband until he allowed her to join him in Russia for 17 months during which time her middle daughter was born Her mother was a nurse who worked till she got pregnant and after her children had all reached adolescence Before her pregnancy, she worked in a livelihood program; during her first marriage, she worked at a kindergarten Her father wanted her to have a university degree. Aryana – since her husband emigrated, she has administered his remittances; also, she has worked on various occasions, even when her husband was in the country Afsaneh - would report a family member for a major crime because it is a sin – she would want him to change and get better	Juana –Although she never imagined she would have to work she feels joy that she can help her children by doing so. "I work so they can study." She tries to teach her children about drugs and alcohol so that they will not end up like their father. Ester – once she determined her husband had begun living with another woman, she began making her own decisions. She decided to live with her parents due to her father-in-law's verbal abuse of her and children. Amalia – she and her husband decided jointly that he should emigrate to make enough money for their daughter's medical expenses. Other than her daughter's illness and her husband's absence, she is satisfied with her life. Marlene – she and her husband jointly made the decision for him to emigrate. She makes more decisions regarding the children and household since her husband is gone. Liliana – administers her husband's remittances and makes more financial decisions since he left Graciela – with her husband gone, she no longer endures abuse.

B. Surmounting the Odds; Changing the Narrative

Statements and stories surfaced during my fieldwork that showed determination to change the cultural narrative about women and/or poverty. Below, I list a few examples from each country.

Guatemala—Jocelyn is a Mayan woman who is also an educated professional—and single. Jocelyn is, in her words, "one hundred percent indigenous." According to her culture, she told me, she should be married with four children. Her parents, however, saw that life for women could be different than in the culture in which they grew up. Both had opportunities to see ways of life in which middle- and upper-class families' daughters went to the university and became professionals, her father because of his stint in the Guatemalan army, and her mother because of her chance to work in the city. Her parents always encouraged her, Jocelyn said, to study. For her part, Jocelyn, seeing the gender inequality surrounding her outside her family as she grew up, dedicated herself to indigenous women's issues and rights. Growing up in rural areas, she noticed many hardships in the people around her, especially in the marked differences between men and women. She now works for equal gender rights and focuses on the high levels of domestic violence in her region.

Juana wanted a different life for her children than the one she and her husband had. One and a half years after leaving, he wanted her to join him in the U.S., but she refused: "I have to be father and mother to the children," she told me (interview with author July 2020). Despite never imagining that she would be anything other than a housewife, Juana asserted that she now how has no option; she added, "I work so they can study" (interview with author July 2020). Despite financial hardships, the children of

Amalia, Graciela, and Ester also continue to go to school; Amalia's children are all past elementary school (*primaria*) age, so Amalia and her husband are shouldering extra expenses to ensure their schooling. Graciela told me that she wants her children to continue to study so that they can have what she did not.

Tajikistan—Dilruba, whose story appears in the introduction of this section, said that her children gave her strength, because she decided that she could no longer live with the uncertainty and pressure of the verbal and emotional abuse from her mother-in-law and husband. She divorced her husband but then fell into depression. However, she affirmed that her children gave her the strength to get on with her life, because she wanted her daughter to see her be strong "so she will understand how a woman should behave . . . [She] shouldn't close her eyes and shouldn't be patient with all this . . . pressure." "It's difficult for me, but I'm trying" (Dilruba, interview with the author August 2020). No longer prohibited from working, Dilruba began working for the government until, through a friend, she interned with an organization engaged in a livelihood project that trains women to start/have own small business. Like her before her divorce, most of the trainees are housewives, and they are afraid of responsibility. After the training, though, they are brave. Once she saw how the training makes a difference in women's lives and realized that she has an aptitude for the work, she began working there.

Niloufar, the daughter of an emigrant widow, wept as she recalled watching her mother suffer and the pain of her dad "disappearing" after several years in Russia. She determined not to let the circumstances of her growing-up years keep her from a better life. She worked her way through college, unlike many of her friends whose parents

could afford to support them. After graduating and marrying, she worked two jobs, one for an NGO and the other selling underwear. She started a learning program to fill a need for her own children, which helped her develop personally as she had to study business, marketing, and customer service. At the same time, she has been able to give her children a better life. Now, she loves her job with a different NGO. Her work, she told me, helps women to increase their skills, have greater freedom and more opportunities. Today, she is a coordinator for livelihood projects for village women, many of them emigrant widows like her mother, and she has successfully started a school for people with learning disabilities, a rarity in Tajikistan.

Other examples of Tajikistani women fighting the current were shorter. Laleh told of one emigrant widow who at first declined to participate in the livelihood project because her husband and in-laws did not give her permission. Yet, when organization personnel offered to talk to the women's family, she got a little fire in her eyes, Laleh said. The woman said that she would talk to her people, and after doing so, she said that she had persuaded them to let her participate. Afsaneh asserted that she would ensure a different life than her own for any daughter of hers. She insisted that she will not let her daughter marry as young as she did. Afsaneh stated that she would want her daughter to study, replying, when asked what about if her husband did not allow that, "He will let" (interview with author October 2020). She explained that her daughter would need to know how to provide for herself and not depend on others like Afsaneh does because Afsaneh does not want her daughter to suffer. Mahtob exhibited similar resolution. Her oldest daughter is enrolled in a university, and Mahtob's sister has promised to help pay

for it. Whether that works out or not, Mahtob said that she will get a bank loan or do whatever it takes to make sure her daughter completes her studies.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

> *Those women who are . . . daughter in laws, if the psychologists would come and . . . train them, explain them how bad it can be, then probably they could understand this, and in the future, they will become good mother in laws, they will not be like their mother in laws [sic].*
>
> – Dilruba, *Interview with author, August 2020*

This concluding chapter looks forward. It primarily deals with two sets of recommendations. The first, relying on remarks by interviewees, suggests ways that individuals, governments, or organizations can work to address progress for women's issues and women's rights, while the second makes recommendations for further research. Finally, I discuss how this research has impacted me personally, and how I plan to carry it forward.

I. Possible Ways Forward

Key informants and subject matter experts in both countries highlighted education as a way forward, both to overcome poverty in the country and to empower women economically and/or socially/emotionally. Yet, several interviewees also observed that even educated people in both countries emigrate because of a weak and/or underpaying job market. Social worker Dilruba, however, specified that besides a university education, women need psychological training before they become mothers-in-law so that they will treat their daughters-in-law better. Additionally, she said, women should learn their rights and understand how others should treat them, while men need training on how to behave with women. Social worker Laleh suggested that in Tajikistan, the United Nations and NGOs can help even more by creating more small business projects.

Indeed, while gender experts in both countries noted the limitations of foreign aid and non-profit assistance, they and some social workers acknowledged or even praised the progress these organizations have contributed to, both socially and economically. Some emigrant widows in both countries also noted the help they have received from non-governmental projects. These projects include, but are not limited to, programs that work for women's education and vocational training, programs that teach women their rights and/or instill self-worth in them as women, and efforts to design or refine legislation that penalizes and, thus, discourages domestic violence.

Entertainment and news media could constitute another tool to combat crime, corruption, and repressive behaviors against women. In 2000, Colette Harris wrote, "[I]ndependence has opened Tajikistan to the wider world. Tajik[istani] girls now have exposure to romances and soap operas from around the world and romanticize the fictional lives they see there [sic] (213-214)." Indeed, in Guatemala, Jocelyn attributed the media with inspiring women to surmount systemic repression. They see that other women have done it and think that they can, too, she observed. When I asked Laleh about the influence of entertainment media, though, she told me that Tajikistani women have televisions and watch Turkish/Indian/ Brazilian movies. "That's how they live in their fantasies;" she explained. Yet, although they may imagine that life can be different, their parents probably discourage them from thinking that it could be for them, she said. I believe, however, that this is an avenue worth pursuing, but agencies or organizations who wish to use news and entertainment media to address economic and social ills must determine the best way to frame their message.

To illustrate, I refer to an article on Islamic suicide terrorism written from a life science perspective. In it, Bradley A. Thayer and Valerie M. Hudson wrote that to combat directly "the attractiveness of terrorists' message" designed to lure young men into becoming suicide bombers, "propaganda that taps into the more primal motivations of potential suicide terrorists, as identified by the life sciences—individual and inclusive fitness" should be designed (2010:59). They went on to describe how media outlets valued by the target audience should define the family institution, so valued in Middle Eastern cultures, in a way that includes potential victims of suicide bombs, using scripture and other sacred writings as support while casting terrorists in an unfavorable light that highlights their shameful betrayal of the culture. Exploring how a similar negative framing of gender violence as undermining cultural values, for example, could provide a means for governments and non-governmental organizations to fight this and other social problems mentioned herein, especially those dealing with women's issues.

II. Recommendations for Further Research

My main recommendation for further study is to expand this project by conducting interviews in person with larger samples drawn from more diverse subpopulations that are more analogous in each country. As previously mentioned, the novel coronavirus pandemic restricted my key informant sample size to three-four emigrant widows, living near or around Tajikistan's largest urban population, and seven emigrant widows living in small communities surrounding a town in a remote, rural area. In Guatemala, only one of the 10 women I interviewed as either a key informant or subject matter expert had a university degree. Two had vocational training, and seven only completed between two and seven years of public schooling. In Tajikistan, however,

all female interviewees had a university degree, except Afsaneh, who had completed all eleven years of Tajikistan's free public schooling. This means that of the ten women in the Tajikistan study, four of whom are emigrant widows (including social worker Dilruba who was one before her divorce), none fit the composite description by interviewees of most women in the country, and more particularly of most emigrant widows, as having only a ninth-grade education. Having a larger, more diverse sample, which would include emigrant widows in urban Guatemala and rural Tajikistan, would permit more parallel comparisons. For example, interviewees in Tajikistan mostly expressed a belief that law enforcement could keep crime (other than drug trafficking and corruption) at bay, but the Human Rights Watch cited herein noted that police presence in rural areas is limited. Thus, interviews in rural areas might elicit different responses than those reported in this study. Having a larger sample might also provide data for quantitative measurements on factors such as urban and rural populations' age at marriage, number of children, levels of education, push factor for male emigration, etc.

Conducting interviews in person would permit more time for questions to follow up on and clarify interviewees' responses, as well as affording the researcher better observations about women's body language and emotion during the interviews, their environment, and so forth, that would contextualize women's responses. For example, questions remain regarding the schooling of several of the Guatemalan emigrant widows, who spoke of financial hardship, yet whose children have remained in school. Some of their children in school are well into their teenage years and twenties, ages at which, per Jocelyn, free public schooling is no longer available. Limited time and dependence on unstable Internet connections prevented my clarifying this apparent disparity. Another

example is Niloufar mentioning that she cooked for her husband between her two jobs. Since I was interviewing her as a subject matter expert on emigrant widows, I did not ask any questions about her own marriage experience in the context of women's labor and structural misogyny. Again, time, technology, and limited availability kept me from following up with the participants at a later time.

As mentioned in the previous section, I heard conflicting views on the role of mass media in women's lives. Further research to determine what, if any, differences exist between the types of news and entertainment women watch in each country, and how some of the topics addressed in this study, e.g., domestic violence, marriage, and education, are presented could help researchers and activists better understand how mass media may influence demographics.

In Guatemala, several emigrant widows said that they had gone to the capital of Guatemala City to work before they married, and several of them met their spouse/significant other there. None of them specified whether they continued working in the capital once they married/started a family there, yet most of the interviewees agreed that cultural standards preclude married women from working outside the home. It would be interesting to examine whether women's opinions differ between married women in urban and rural areas, and for those who had experience in both types of regions, if they adapted their roles as married women depending on their location.

Some other cultural practices could further shed light on the dynamics surrounding labor migration. For instance, both cultures have instances of polygamy, but I did not investigate whether the rates of polygamy are comparable. Other questions surrounding this practice remain: Does this cultural trend make men more likely to marry

and/or start another family abroad? If so, how does it affect whether they return (in Guatemala) or how often they return and for how long (in Tajikistan)? Another tradition that merits further exploration is that of the obligation of a man's family to finance a big wedding. No one mentioned anything similar, in Guatemala, or even any other tradition that might constitute a large expense for a family, except that in some places, the practice of a dowry for the bride is still practiced.

III. Personal Impact

This research project has led to insights on the lives of women in Tajikistan and Guatemala, as well as confirming ties between dynamics that my research had only hinted at. I had previously heard of and witnessed *machismo,* the Latin American brand of performing masculine misogyny, due to spending a lot of time in Mexico and Peru, having family members and close friends from those places, and working as a Spanish translator and interpreter for law enforcement for over a decade. This experience did not prepare me, however, for the severity of the misogyny faced by many Guatemalan women and the widespread pressure to marry in their teenage years. Similarly, my literature review had familiarized me with the abuse and drudgery that Tajikistani wives often endure, but not with the idea that they are literally viewed as slaves, a disclosure made during my field work. The relative openness of poppy cultivation for narcotics trafficking in Guatemala, its established state, and its tie to poverty were unexpected for me as well. However, the agency that women in both countries exhibited in the face of abuse, abandonment, and systemic repression were a surprising and positive revelation, and may constitute a sign of hope for the future of women's rights in both countries.

I hope to expand this study into a mixed-methods design using qualitative and quantitative data as mentioned in the introduction and in the first part of the "Recommendations" section, traveling to each of the countries in person to conduct interviews of larger, more diverse sample populations from different regions. In addition, graduate-level courses on gender studies and/or social work might help me to further refine my methodology to better uncover information useful to designing programs that effectively address underlying factors in the countries where economic underdevelopment and structural misogyny place women at a double disadvantage.

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APPENDIX A: 2011 CRIME STATISTICS[40] (RATE PER 100,000 POPULATION)

Crime	Tajikistan	*Rank (high-low)*	Guatemala	*Rank (high-low)*	United States of America	*Rank (high-low)*	*Countries Reporting (#)*
Burglary	7.98	81	12.16	76	701.30	15	92
Theft	47.66	94	54.33	92	1974.14	12	103
Car theft	0.62	93	80.	34	229.96	10	100
Robbery	3.74	96	22.81	75	113.85	28	106
Kidnapping	2.23	23	0.83	41	---	---	98
Serious Assault	48.52	51	41.72	55	241.48	23	101
Sexual Violence	2.47	88	3.81	84	---	---	100
Homicide	1.64	108	38	6	4.71	62	163

[40] In all crime categories, 2011 is the last year for which Tajikistan reported statistics.

APPENDIX B: KEY INFORMANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

Hello, my name is Judy Lane. I am a student at the University of Texas at Austin. I am not in any way associated with (*Name of the in-country NGO*), the organization that contacted you about this interview. They are just helping by me contacting you for the interview. The person who is there with you is (*Name of the in-country facilitator*). (*Name of the in-country NGO facilitator*) is not employed by the university. I hired him/her to help me conduct this interview via videoconference over the Internet. I had planned to travel to (*Name of country*) to talk to you myself, but I cannot because of the coronavirus pandemic.

I want to thank you very much for agreeing to help me by doing this interview. I am doing research on people like you, whose husbands or significant others have left them and their children to go work abroad. You will not receive a direct benefit from this research; however, it will help me understand the dynamics of situations like yours, and the result of my research can help people like you in the future. Also, I did send money to (*Name of the in-country facilitator*) to buy you some groceries because I very much appreciate you giving me a couple of hours of your time.

Informed Consent

a. I will write down your answers so I can use them as part of my research. My research is trying to understand the lives of women in (your country) and (other country) whose husband migrate for labor. Hopefully, this work can help people who do mission and NGO work understand how to better help people like you in the future.

b. Your participation is voluntary. You are allowed to stop the interview at any time.

c. I will ask you questions about yourself, your family, your finances, your work, your culture, your religion, and what you know about crime and violence in your region. If you do not understand a question, I can repeat it or ask it a different way. If you do not want to answer any question for any reason, we can skip it and go on to the next one.

d. This interview will take one-two hours.

e. Your real name will not be used to make the report.

f. I will leave a paper with you with my phone number and email and the phone number and email of the university where I study, so that if you have any problem resulting from this interview, you can contact us. (*Name of the in-country NGO facilitator*) will also have a copy of this information, so you can also contact him/her to help you get in touch with us if you need to. S/he is not affiliated with the university and is not involved in the research, so s/he cannot answer questions about it, s/he can just help you contact me.

g. I am offering you these groceries (about $5-$10 worth of groceries) to thank you for helping me with my research!

Basic Demographic

1. Name, age.
2. Do you have a husband/domestic partner/significant other? Do you have children together? How many? What are their ages?
3. How long have you been married/together? How did you meet and start a family together?

4. Has your husband emigrated? If so, do you live alone with your children? With other family members? Other adults? If so, who?
5. Do you belong to a religion? If so, what religion?

Partner/Significant Other

1. Please tell me a little about your husband/significant other. What is he like as a person?
2. What is his family like? Where did he grow up? Please tell me about his parents, his brothers and sisters, other family members that he grew up around. How did his family live, get food, and make money?
3. Did he go to school? If so, how long? What was his schooling like? What age did he start working? What kind of work has he done?
4. How did you meet him? Where did you meet him? How did you end up getting married/living together/having children together?
5. Did you have any choice about being with him? Did you feel any pressure to be with him? If you could go back and choose now, would you still choose to be with him/have children with him? (*If any differences*) What would you do differently? Why?

Family

1. Where did your husband emigrate to? What circumstances led to him doing this?
2. Has he ever returned, or does he sometimes return? When/how often? Does he plan to ever return permanently? What makes you think that he will or will not?
3. How has your relationship with him changed since he emigrated/began periodically emigrating? How often do you two communicate? How do you communicate

(phone/email/other)? What do you talk about? Do you make more/less/different decisions about your children with him gone (schooling/clothing/behavior)?

4. Has his being gone changed your relationship with his family? Your family? Your community (town/neighborhood)? If so, in what ways?
5. How has his being gone affected the children? Do they talk about him or refer to him in any way (look at his picture or things that belong to him)? Do they behave differently when he's gone/since he's been gone than they do when he is/was here? Do changes in their behavior occur when he leaves/left or comes/came back? Has anything else changed for them besides his presence/absence (going to school, moving to another house, a bad illness)? Has their behavior changed after any of those changes?

Family Work/Finances

1. Do you work/have you ever worked outside the home? Do you work/have you worked while your husband is gone? When he is/was here? How did you decide to work (in either case)?
2. Has your family's financial situation changed since your husband emigrated? (Or if recent, do you expect that it will)? If so, how? (Better/worse/better in some ways, worse in some ways - if so, what ways?)
3. Has his being gone changed who makes financial decisions for the household/family? If so, how? Who makes which financial decisions?
4. How do you decide/how does your family decide what to spend money on while he is/was gone? When he is/was here? Does your family still spend money on the same

things you did before he left/while he's gone? (E.g., more/less on medicine, food, clothing, home repair, etc.)

5. Does anyone else help you with finances or resources such as food, clothing, childcare etc.? If so, who? When did they decide to do so? Is this assistance regular/reliable? Is it different when your husband is here? Do they say anything about what makes/made them decide to help you? If they do not give assistance while he is/was here, do you prefer the assistance or to have him here? What is better about (whichever they choose)?

Social *(includes culture/religion)*

1. In your culture, what does it mean to be a man? What does it mean to be a woman? What does your culture say men should be responsible for? Women? Does your religion support these ideas? How? Do you agree with these ideas or not? What do you agree/not agree with?
2. Do you consider yourself to be a religious person? Do you feel like your religion has affected your life? How would your life be different if you were not as religious/more religious/of a different religion?
3. Do you have people in your life to talk to about your life, your problems, your fears? Who? How often do you talk to this person/these people? Would you like more/less social time? What would have to change for that to happen? If you want and could have more social time, what would you talk about?
4. Are other people in your family, your husband's family, your community religious? If so, how does this affect your life?

5. Do you feel like your life is easier/harder than it should be, or is it about right? If easier/harder, in what ways? In an ideal world, what could/should be different in your community to improve your life/the lives of people in your community who are struggling? What would have to happen to make those changes (the way people here/in local gov/men/women/religious people/the central gov think?)

Perception of Society

1. I noticed (in your community or the big city) that some people have nice houses and/or there are big buildings. However, I also see that many people (or you) live in a small house/apartment and seem not to have very much. Why do you think there are these differences?
2. Is there crime in your community? Region? Country? What kinds of crime? How much/little . . . ?
3. Why do you think these types of crime happen/not happen here? (Poverty/feeling powerless, etc.)
4. Do you think many women in your community face physical violence - e.g., being beaten, raped, killed? What do you think about this? Who commits this violence? What about psychological violence (e.g., getting you to do something by threatening physical violence or not giving you money/food, making you feel guilty, saying bad things about you or your family)? What do you think about this? Who commits this violence?
5. Do you feel safe going to the police if a stranger does something bad to you or your family? What about if a family member does? If not, what are the risks?

APPENDIX C: KEY INFORMANT QUESTIONNAIRE - SPANISH

Aviso para consentimiento

a. Voy a escribir sus respuestas para poderlas usar en mis investigaciones. Mis investigaciones tienen el fin de intentar de entender las vidas de las mujeres en Guatemala y Tayikistán cuyos maridos migran a trabajar. Espero que esta labor puede ayudar a las personas que trabajan en las misiones y las ONGs para mejor comprender como ayudar a las personas como usted en el futuro.
b. Su participación es voluntaria. Usted puede terminar la entrevista en cualquier momento.
c. Yo le voy a hacer preguntas sobre usted, su familia, sus finanzas, su trabajo, su cultura, su religión y su conocimiento de la delincuencia y la violencia en esta región. Si usted no entiende una pregunta, se la puedo repetir o hacérsela de otra forma. Si usted no quiere contestar cualquier pregunta por cualquier razón, la podemos pasar y continuar con la siguiente.
d. Esta entrevista tomará entre una y dos horas.
e. Su nombre verdadero no se utilizará en el informe.
f. Le voy a dejar un papel con mi número telefónico y correo electrónico y el número y correo electrónico de la universidad donde estudio. Así usted puede comunicarse con nosotros si surge algún problema relacionado con esta entrevista. (*Nombre del facilitador/de la facilitadora del ONG en el país*) también tendrá una copia de esta información, así que usted puede comunicarse con él/ella, y él/ella le ayuda a comunicarse con nosotros, si es necesario.

g. ¡Le ofrezco estos comestibles (valor de $15) como agradecimiento por haberme ayudado con mis investigaciones!

Demográficas básicas

1. Nombre, edad
2. ¿Tiene usted a un marido/una pareja? ¿Tienen ustedes hijos juntos? ¿Cuántos? ¿Cuáles son sus edades?
3. ¿Cuánto tiempo tienen ustedes casados/juntos? ¿Cómo es que ustedes se conocían y empezaban una familia juntos?
4. ¿Su marido/pareja se ha migrado? Si es que sí, ¿vive usted sola con sus hijos? ¿Con otros familiares? ¿Otros adultos? Si es que sí, ¿Quiénes?
5. ¿Pertenece usted a alguna religión? Si es que sí, ¿Cuál religión?

Familia

1. ¿A dónde migró su marido? ¿Cuáles fueron las circunstancias que guio a que él migrara?
2. ¿Alguna vez él ha regresado, o regresa él de vez en cuando? ¿Cuándo/que tan frecuente? ¿Tiene él planes para regresar de manera permanente? ¿Qué hace que usted piense que él sí regrese o que no regrese?
3. ¿Cómo ha cambiado su relación con él desde que el migró/empezó a migrar periódicamente? ¿Con que frecuencia se comunican ustedes? ¿Cómo se comunican (teléfono, correo, etc.)? ¿De qué hablan? ¿Usted toma más/menos/diferentes decisiones sobre los niños cuando él no está (escuela/ropa/comportamiento)?

4. ¿La ausencia de él ha hecho cambiar la relación entre usted y la familia de él? ¿La familia de usted? ¿La comunidad (pueblo/vecindario)? Si es que sí, ¿cómo/en qué manera?
5. ¿La ausencia de él ha afectado a los niños? ¿Ellos hablan de él o refieren a él en alguna manera (mirando su foto o las cosas de él)? ¿Ellos se comportan de manera diferente cuando él no está/desde que se fue y cuando está/regresa? ¿Ha habido otros cambios para ellos aparte de su ausencia (una enfermedad grave, mudándose a otra casa, yendo a la escuela)? Si es que sí, ¿su comportamiento ha cambiado a partir de esos cambios?

Trabajo/finanzas de la familia

1. ¿Usted trabaja/ha trabajado alguna vez fuera de la casa? ¿Usted trabaja/ha trabajado alguna vez cuando no está su marido? ¿Cuándo él está? En los dos casos, ¿qué hizo que usted decidera trabajar/no trabajar?
2. ¿La situación económica de su familia ha cambiado desde que su marido migró? (O si reciente, ¿espera usted que cambie?) Si es que sí, ¿cómo? (Mejor/peor/mejor en algunas maneras, peor en algunas maneras – si así es, ¿en qué maneras?)
3. Como él se ha ido, ¿ha cambiado quién toma las decisiones económicas de la casa/familia? Si es que sí, ¿cómo ha cambiado? ¿Quién toma cuales decisiones?
4. ¿Su familia aún gasta dinero en las mismas cosas que antes de que él se fuera? (Por ejemplo, más/menos en medicamento, comida, ropa, reparaciones de la casa, etc.) ¿Cómo decide usted/cómo decide su familia en qué gastar dinero cuando él no está? ¿Cuándo él está?

5. ¿Hay alguien más que le ayuda con finanzas o recursos como comida, ropa, cuidando a los niños, etc.? Si es que sí, ¿quién? ¿Cuándo decidió esa persona/esas personas ayudar? ¿Su ayuda es regular/confiable? ¿Es diferente cuando su marido está aquí? ¿Esa persona/esas personas hablan sobre por qué decidieron ayudarla? Si no le ayudan cuando él está/estuvo, ¿prefiere usted tener la ayuda o que él esté? ¿Cuál es la ventaja de (lo que escogió)?

Social (*incluye cultura/religión*)

1. En su cultura, ¿qué significa ser hombre? ¿Qué significa ser mujer? En su cultura, ¿Cuáles son las responsabilidades del hombre? ¿De la mujer? ¿Su religión apoya esas ideas? ¿Cómo? ¿Usted está de acuerdo con esas ideas o no? ¿Con qué está/no está de acuerdo?
2. ¿Usted se considera una persona religiosa? ¿Cree usted que su religión ha afectado su vida? ¿En qué sería diferente su vida si usted fuera menos/más religiosa/de una religión diferente?
3. ¿Tiene usted a personas con quien puede hablar de su vida, sus problemas, sus temores? ¿Quiénes son? ¿Cuán frecuente puede usted hablar con esa persona/esas personas? ¿Quisiera usted tener más tiempo social? ¿Qué tendría que cambiar para que eso sucediera? Si usted quisiera más tiempo social y pudiera tenerlo, ¿de qué hablaría?
4. En su familia, la familia de su marido, y su comunidad, ¿hay otra gente religiosa? Si es que sí, ¿cómo afecta su vida?
5. ¿Cree usted que su vida es más fácil/más dura de lo que debe ser, o es tal como debe ser? Si es más fácil/más dura, ¿en qué maneras? En un mundo ideal, ¿qué

podría/debería ser diferente en su comunidad para que fuera mejor la vida de usted/la gente de su comunidad que batallan mucho. ¿Qué tendría que cambiar para efectuar esos cambios? (Por ejemplo, la forma de pensar de la gente aquí/el gobierno local/los hombres/las mujeres/la gente religiosa/el gobierno central)

Percepción de la sociedad

1. Me di cuenta (en su comunidad o en la ciudad grande) de que algunas personas tienen casas lindas y/o hay edificios grandes. Sin embargo, también veo que mucha gente (o usted) vive en una casa chiquita/un apartamento chiquito, y no tiene mucho. ¿Por qué cree usted que existen esas diferencias?
2. ¿Hay mucha delincuencia en su comunidad? ¿Región? ¿País? ¿Qué clase de delincuencia? ¿Cuánto/qué tan poquito . . . ?
3. ¿Por qué cree usted que esa clase de delincuencia sucede/no sucede aquí? (Pobreza/se sienten sin poder, etc.)
4. ¿Cree usted que muchas mujeres en su comunidad enfrentan violencia física (por ejemplo, golpes, violación, asesinato)? ¿Qué opina usted de eso? ¿Quién comete la violencia? ¿Qué de la violencia psicológica (por ejemplo, obligara a una persona a hacer algo por amenazas de violencia física o de no dar dinero/comida a la persona, hacer que la persona se sienta culpable de algo, hablar mal de la persona o su familia)? ¿Qué opina usted de eso? ¿Quién comete esa clase de violencia?
5. Si un extraño hace algo mal a usted o a su familia ¿usted se siente segura si va a la policía? ¿Qué si es un familiar que hace algo mal? ¿Si es que no, ¿Cuáles son los riesgos?

APPENDIX D: SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

Hello, thank you so much for agreeing to speak with me today. My name is Judy Lane. I am a student at the University of Texas at Austin. I am doing research for a thesis that looks at women whose husbands leave them to engage in labor migration. I had planned to travel to (your country) and (other country) this summer to interview women who are in this situation, but unfortunately, because of the pandemic, this became impossible. Instead, I am doing these video and phone interviews with NGO workers like yourself who encounter these women. I am also talking to women's rights activists. I hope that you and others I interview can help me better understand these women's lives and challenges they may face socially and economically. Now, let me go over some information about how this interview will be conducted:

Informed Consent

1. I will record the interview and later transcribe parts of the conversation so I can use them as part of my research. As I said, my research is trying to understand the lives of women in (your country) and (other country) whose husbands migrate for labor. Hopefully, this work can help people who do mission and NGO work understand how to better help these women in the future.
2. Your participation is voluntary. You may stop the interview at any time.
3. I will ask you questions about these women, their families, their finances, their work, culture, and religion, and what you know about crime and violence in the regions that they live in. If you do not understand a question, I can repeat it or ask it a different

way. If you do not want to answer any question for any reason, we can skip it and go on to the next one.

4. This interview will take one-two hours.
5. Your real name will not be used to make the report – I will give you a fake name in the report.
6. Either I or (*in-country contact)* will email you my phone number and email and the phone number and email of the university where I study, so that if you have any problem resulting from this interview, you can contact us. (*Name of the in-country NGO facilitator*) will also have a copy of this information, so you can also contact him/her to help you get in touch with us if you need to. S/he is not affiliated with the university and is not involved in the research, so s/he cannot answer questions about it, but s/he can help you contact me.
7. As we agreed, I will be paying you for your time today by (?????????) to thank you for helping me with my research!

Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your work.
    a. How did you get involved in it?
    b. Do you enjoy it?
    c. Has it changed from when you first started doing it, and if so, how?
2. Please tell me about the kinds of families where the husband leaves for labor migration and the wife stays in (the country).
    a. Where do they usually live? (In a house, apartment, with relatives, etc.)?
    b. What usually leads to them getting married in the first place?

c. Is there any freedom of choice in these marriages? How little/to what extent?
d. Are these mostly rural families? Urban families? Both?
e. In these families, how are responsibilities divided for the household? (E.g., who provides for the family? Who prepares meals? Etc.)
f. What education level does the husband usually have?
g. The wife?
h. What is life for the children of the household like (e.g., do they go to school, spend time with grandparents, help their parents, etc.)?
i. Is life different for the children when their father is gone? If so, in what ways?
j. How much control over the children's life – education, medical care, assigning chores does the mother have?
k. Does that change when the father is gone?
l. From a familial standpoint, does it change things for the mother when the father is present/absent? From a social standpoint?
m. How do men treat their wives when they're home? When they're gone?
n. Does the wife have freedom to do what she wants when the husband is not there? Does she answer to anyone? Please explain.

3. Let's talk about finances/economics.
    a. Do any of the "emigration widows" work or do anything to provide for the families?
    b. If so, does this change depending on whether the husband is present?
    c. What is the economy like in areas where there is large scale labor migration? I.e., how do people make a living?

d. Is there much social stratification in these areas (different socioeconomic classes)? If so, what contributes to that?
e. How do people in a lower socioeconomic status view the fact that they're "lower down" financially/socially?
f. What factors lead to people leaving to work outside the country?
g. Where do they go to work? What do they do there?
h. How long do they stay/do they come back? If so, when/how often?
i. Do they typically send money back to their wives/children/other family members at home?
j. If so, what is the money used for?
k. Who controls the money sent back home?
l. Does how money is spent in the home change depending on whether the father is there or working out of the country? If so, how?
m. Does anyone else help the nuclear family with finances? If so who and in what way?

4. I want to talk now a little about social, cultural, and religious matters.
    a. How religious are most of these families?
    b. Does one gender tend to be more religious than the other?
    c. What does the culture say that being a man means? A woman?
    d. How much does religion influence what men and women think their roles are?
    e. Do you believe this is culture/tradition influencing religion? For example, someone who practices this religion in a different place might interpret it differently because of their culture.

f. How often do women talk about their religious beliefs or ideas? Men?

g. Do women have much social interaction? With whom?

h. Do "emigration widows" typically have someone in their life they can talk to about their life/problems/fears? If so, who?

i. How much crime is in regions where a large percentage of the population migrates for labor? What kinds (drug trafficking, weapons smuggling, petty thievery, etc.)?

j. What do you think causes these crimes (poverty, boredom, way of life, etc.)?

k. Is there any violence? If so, what kinds? Please explain this more.

l. Do you think many women in the community face physical violence - e.g., being beaten, raped, killed? What do you think about this? Who commits this violence?

m. What about psychological violence (e.g., getting you to do something by threatening physical violence or not giving you money/food, making you feel guilty, saying bad things about you or your family)? What do you think about this? Who commits this violence?

n. Do women feel safe going to the police if a stranger does something bad to them or their family?

o. What about if a family member does?

p. If not, what are the risks?

5. Let's talk now about your work and interaction with these ladies and their children.

   a. How do you view these situations in general (good, bad, some of both, OK)? Please explain.

b. If you think there are problems in these situations, what are the problems?

c. What are their underlying causes?

d. What changes would you like to see that would positively affect these women's situations?

e. What can the government do differently to help these families? At local, regional, and national levels.

f. What can NGOs and non-profits do to positively affect these situations? International organizations like the UN?